Śrī Harināma
Mahā-mantra

Śrī Harināma Mahā-mantra

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śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Harināma Mahā-mantra

- The sequence of the mahā-mantra
- Definitions of the moods of opulence and sweetness
- The glories of the holy name
- The process of chanting the holy name
- Offences to be kept in mind while chanting the holy name

Compiled by

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

VRINDAVAN • NEW DELHI • SAN FRANCISCO

Dedicated to

The founder of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti
and the best amongst the 10th generation of
descendants in the bhāgavat-paramparā from
Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu

śrī gurupāda-padma
śrī gauḍīya-vedānta-ācārya-keśarī
nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa oṁ viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna
Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja



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Introduction

to the Hindi edition

It gives me unending pleasure to present to the faithful readers the tenth edition of this booklet, *Śrī Harināma Mahā-mantra*, which has been published by the inspiration of my spiritual master, the most causelessly merciful *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa oṁ viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. I have endeavoured my utmost to make the presentation of this book simple and straight-forward.

It has been ascertained that in the present age of Kali, the supreme religion (*dharma*) is *saṅkīrtana*, or chanting the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is not exclusively for a particular race of people; it is the actual nature of all living entities and is eternal and non-changeable. That which alters according to time, place and circumstance is not true *dharma*; rather it is "personal faith". In the English language, the term "religion" is used when a particular behaviour has been adopted. However this is not appropriate. In this world we

see that a Hindu may become a Muslim, and a Muslim may become a Christian. We see this happening everywhere. The conclusion is that if for any reason someone changes their faith, placing it elsewhere, then that faith cannot truly be called *dharma*. Real *dharma* never undergoes any transformation.

About five hundred and twenty years ago, Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, who is the combined form of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, resolved all conflicts regarding *dharma* (religion), scripture, authentic disciplic successions (*sampradāyas*), sinful acts, good policy, bad policy, knowledge, *yoga*, unrestricted behaviour, race, capitalists, labourers, problems, and caste and *āśrama*, and thus conquered everyone's heart.

Presently, however, so many problems exist in abundance throughout the whole world and just like contagious diseases, they have a firm grip on almost everyone. New conflicts are being created every day. In the name of reconciliation, behaviour antagonistic to scriptural injunctions that are passed down within the four authorized *sampradāyas* – in the form of egalitarianism – is being strongly encouraged.

Currently, anything termed "conciousness" is not accepted by our society. If, in such worldwide peril, there is one all-encompassing and completely dignified solution, it is the panacea named *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, chanting the transcendental names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as practised and preached by Śrī

Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Other than this, there is no way that any other endeavour can possibly succeed.

The most authoritative and spiritually elevated personalities have expressed these thoughts very conspicuously in a number of places. Highly exalted personalities, who are completely devoid of envy, such as Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura and Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, and who are unhappy to see the misery of others, have collected the extremely confidential statements of the scriptures. On the basis of these statements, they have established the supreme position of the Śrī Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* as uttered by Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

By immense good fortune, a living entity can experience an awakening of unflinching faith in the statements of such realized saintly persons. As he follows the instructions of these *mahā-janas* (great souls), he frees himself from the root of all problems by crossing the unlimited ocean of repeated birth and death and becoming situated in his eternal constitutional position.

It is a matter of great sadness that so many illusionists, inspired by Kali, cheat the faithful and simple-hearted people and also destroy themselves by presenting arguments that oppose the actual process of chanting the holy name

(*nāma-saṅkīrtana*). Some people say that instead of chanting "*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa*", one should first chant "*hare rāma hare rāma*". Others say that the *mahā-mantra* is "*śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya, prabhu nityānanda, hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma, śrī rādhe-govinda*". Some others say that one should always chant "*nitāi gaura rādhe-śyāma, hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma*" or that "*rāma, rāma*" within the *mahā-mantra* is an address to Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra. Still others affirm that the *mahā-mantra* should only be recited within the mind, not chanted or sung out loud.

Many people accept as their authorities the very people who are spreading Kali's network, not understanding the evil influence of this age of Kali. These 'authorities' bewilder others with their misconceptions, which have sprung from their own fertile imagination. Such misconceptions are due to their gross materialistic vision and their inability to understand the inconceivable potency within the unerring medicine of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, as practised and preached by the Supreme Lord, Śrī Caitanyadeva.

To open the eyes of the people of this world to these illusionists, I am presenting in this small book literally hundreds of scriptural quotes as evidence. Such proofs have been presented by the followers of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, the dear most eternal associate of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. May the people of this world attain the

real wish-fulfilling jewel of that *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, which is devoid of artificiality, and gain the supreme benefit.

My most worshipful spiritual master and grand-spiritual master are devoid of any artificiality, most trustworthy and most adept in distributing *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* as practised and preached by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. They do so within the conceptual line of Śrī Śaccidānanda Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, who brought the current of pure *bhakti* to this world, just as King Bhagīratha brought the Ganges. By their unlimited mercy this great medicine is being disseminated everywhere in its pristine form, and the ignoble efforts of selfishly motivated persons have almost been ineffective. Still it is necessary to distribute this booklet so that ill-intentioned persons cannot be so audacious as to try to cover the purity of the *mahā-mantra*.

The essence of the instructions that Śrīman Mahāprabhu imparted to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī [or the essence of the eternal instruction of *dharma*] is that one should perform *nāma-saṅkīrtana* in the association of saintly persons. The *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* is the Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *pāraka-mantra*, or the *mantra* that helps one attain Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. One obtains *prema* for the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and direct realization of one's eternal constitutional position (*svarūpa*), by constantly practising the chanting of this *mahā-mantra*.

The English edition of this booklet has been widely distributed, and it has also been translated into many other languages. Many persons have thus received supreme benefit and are chanting the *mahā-mantra* in a purely authentic manner. Those who are obsessed with prejudice, however, cannot be helped, even by the Supreme Lord.

Finally, may the personified form of the Supreme Lord's mercy, my most worshipful Śrīla Gurudeva, shower his profuse mercy upon me so that I may achieve the highest qualification and perform the service that is most dear to his heart (*mano-'bhīṣṭa-sevā*). This is my heartfelt supplication at his lotus feet, which bestow *prema*.

Due to the great haste in which the publication was prepared, some small errors may remain. May the faithful readers please inform us of these errors, so we can correct them for the next edition.

Praying for a particle of the mercy of Hari-Guru-Vaiṣṇava
Tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa

Śrī Nandotsava
522 years after the appearance of Śrī Caitanya,
25 August, 2008

Preface

The *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* is eternal, and in this world, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is thousands upon thousands of years old. In the Western world, though, it is relatively new. It was introduced to America in 1965 by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Prabhupāda. "The Hare Kṛṣṇas", as they have come to be known, are often seen singing the *mahā-mantra – hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare* – throughout the world's towns and villages. Some people find they brighten and lift the heavy atmosphere of materialism that envelopes modern civilization. Others view them with reserve, not understanding their public chanting and dancing and not feeling comfortable to question it. We hope this booklet clarifies the authenticity of their practice.

India's ancient Vedic texts unequivocally present the chanting of *hare kṛṣṇa* as the formula for freeing oneself from all suffering and becoming established in one's eternal spiritual position.

Absorption in chanting the *mahā-mantra* is not indicative of sentimental religiosity or mindless fanaticism. *Man* means "mind" and *tra* means "to free". Therefore, a *mantra* is not merely sound; it has a specific potency and acts to liberate one from the devitalizing nature of material consciousness. The *mahā-mantra*, meaning the most exalted of all *mantras*, does this to the superlative degree. If it is chanted seriously, one becomes free from all mundane self-conception and firmly situated in one's unique, blissful spiritual nature.

It is also written in the Vedas that the Supreme Lord, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, advents to propagate the *mahā-mantra* through His own deep immersion in it. To this day, the empowered pure Vaiṣṇavas representing Him are fulfilling His mission. Indeed, this has been accomplished so effectively that millions of people the world over are aware of the *mahā-mantra*, especially the first two words – *hare kṛṣṇa*.

The sacred *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* bestows a tangible experience of transcendence. When chanted perfectly, it enables direct communion with the Supreme Lord, that is, realization of one's eternal, affectionate mood of service to Him.

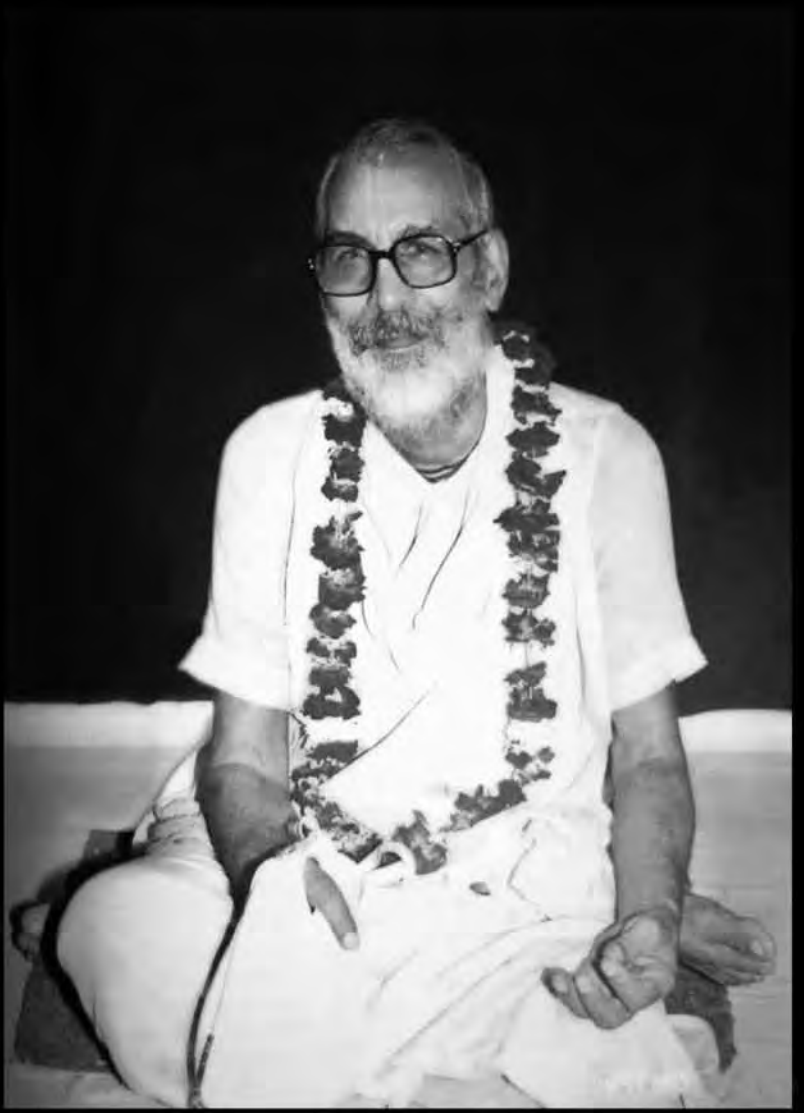
This book is a priceless meditation for someone already deeply involved in the process of chanting the *mahā-mantra*. Their spiritual practice will be invigorated and their faith in chanting strengthened by carefully studying its contents. The authoritative elaborations on the *mahā-mantra* given

herein are astounding and serve to refresh one's appreciation of chanting. The gravity of the article by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura calls us to make the chanting of the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* our life and soul. For the serious practitioner, this book is a most dear friend.

We are confident that any sincere enquirer who respectfully reads this book will recognize that chanting this *mahā-mantra*, either congregationally or in solitude, is an authentic joyful process. And if, upon completing this text, that reader takes to uttering that sacred sound, we will feel most satisfied, as our saintly preceptors assure us that those who chant the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* are bound for an experience of inner delight.

Aspiring to chant the holy name
under the guidance of Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇavas

The Publishing Team of the Third Edition



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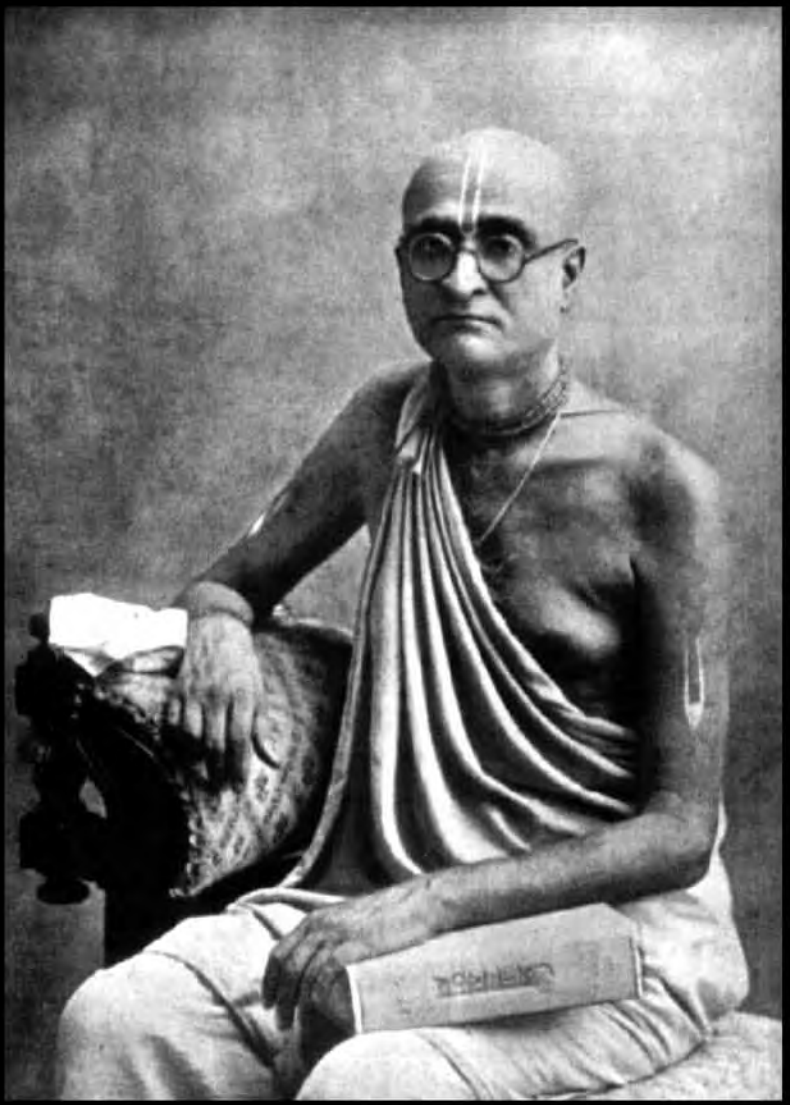


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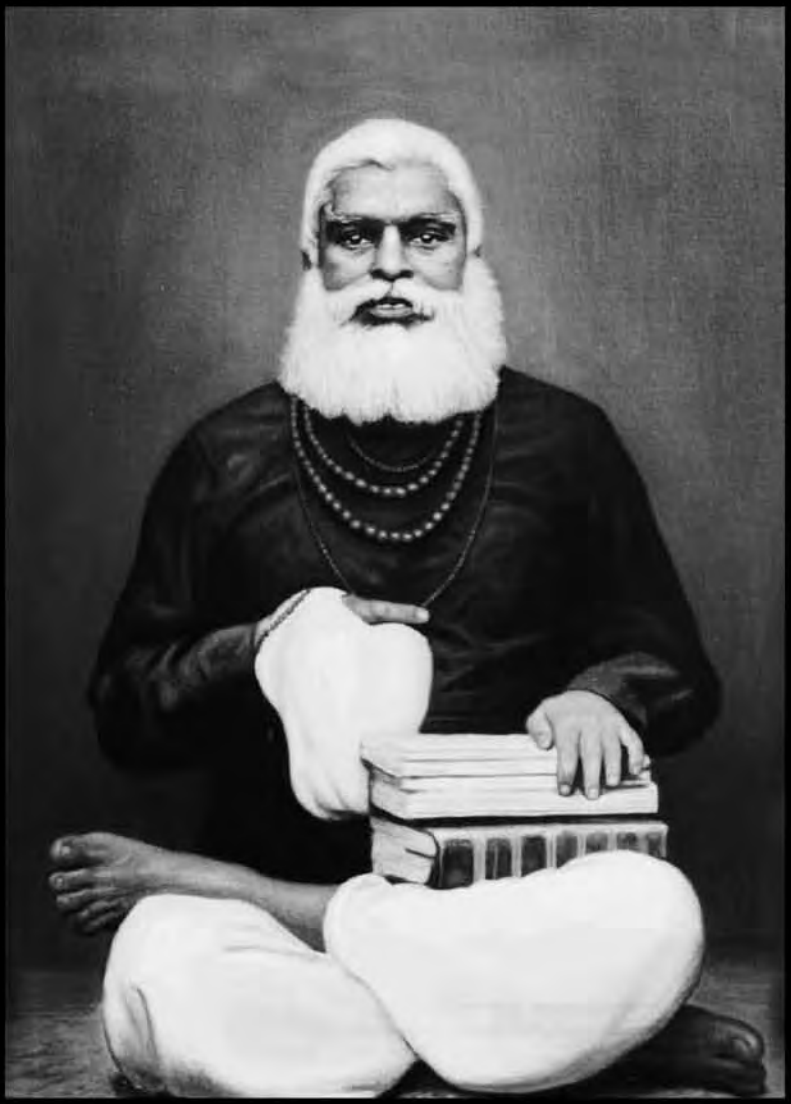
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Saccidānanda Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura




Śrī Harināma
Mahā-mantra

Hare Kṛṣṇa

Hare Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa

Hare Hare

Hare Rāma

Hare Rāma

Rāma Rāma

Hare Hare

The transcendental name – *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare* – is the *mahā-mantra*, or supreme *mantra*, for deliverance in Kali-yuga. This is in accordance with Vaiṣṇava scriptures such as the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas and Saṁhitās. Chanting this sixteen word *mahā-mantra* is the primary religious process of this age.

The name of the Supreme Lord is non-different from His very form. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has suffused His names with His sweet form, with all of His qualities, with His sweet pastimes, with His mercy and with all of His potencies.

Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is *nāmī*, the possessor of His name. Although His personal form is identical with His name, in certain circumstances, the name of Bhagavān is even more merciful than He is. It is in this form of His own name that by His causeless mercy the

original Supreme Person, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, descended to deliver the conditioned souls.

A bona fide spiritual master is constantly absorbed in chanting and remembering the name of Bhagavān. One who is most fortunate takes initiation (*dīkṣā*) into the chanting of the holy name from such a *guru*. In this way he worships the Supreme Lord, Śrī Bhagavān, by performing congregational chanting of His names (*saṅkīrtana*), by daily chanting a fixed number of names (*japa*) and by remembering those names (*smaraṇa*). Scripture states that in this present age of Kali, it is more glorious to loudly chant the holy name than to remember that name or chant *japa*:

> *japato hari-nāmāni sthāne śata-guṇādhikaḥ*
> *ātmānañ ca punāty uccair japan śrotṛn punāti ca*
>
> *Śrī Nāradīya Purāṇa,*
> verse spoken by Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja

A person who chants the names of Śrī Hari loudly is one hundred times superior to one who chants those names quietly. The person who chants quietly only benefits and purifies himself, whereas a person who chants loudly also benefits and purifies all who hear him, such as animals, insects, birds, trees, creepers and shrubs. Although such entities cannot chant, they can be delivered from the ocean of birth and death simply by hearing this *harināma*.

Thus, in this age of Kali, the crest-jewel of all kinds of spiritual practices is to perform *saṅkīrtana* of the sixteen word *harināma mahā-mantra*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the most merciful *avatāra*, or incarnation of God, who purifies the souls of Kali-yuga. He, too, has instructed us to continually perform *saṅkīrtana* of the sacred names of the Lord – "*kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*" (*Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka* 3).

The *Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa* clearly states:

> *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam*
> *kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*
>
> To make spiritual progress in Kali-yuga there is no other way, there is no other way, there is no other way, other than by chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name.

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī explains the meaning of the above verse as follows:

> *kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra*
> *nāma haite haya sarva-jagat-nistāra*
>
> *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 17.22)
>
> In this Age of Kali, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has incarnated as the holy name. It is through the holy name that the whole world is delivered.

dārḍhya lāgi' 'harer nāma'-ukti tina-vāra
jaḍa-loka bujhāite punaḥ 'eva'-kāra

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 17.23)

To benefit materialisticly minded people and help them develop firm faith in the holy name, the words *harer nāma* [in the above verse from *Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa*] have been repeated three times, and *eva*, meaning "certainly", has been used for emphasis.

'kevala'–śabde punarapi niścaya-karaṇa
jñāna-yoga-tapa-karma-ādi nivāraṇa

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 17.24)

The use of the word *kevala* (only) establishes the renunciation of all other karmic activities, such as the cultivation of knowledge (*jñāna*), the practice of mystic *yoga*, and the performance of austerities (*tapa*).

anyathā ye māne, tāra nāhika nistāra
nāhi, nāhi, nāhi—e tina ukta 'eva'-kāra

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 17.25)

For one who disobeys the injunctions of the scriptures, it will be impossible to obtain deliverance. To clarify this, *nāsty eva* (there is no other way) has also been repeated three times.

The Sequence of the Mahā-mantra

Some people say that the *mahā-mantra* should be chanted in the following sequence:

hare rāma hare rāma
rāma rāma hare hare
hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare

Their reasoning is based on the following points:

(1) The *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad* published by Venkateśa Press, Mumbai, states that this *mahā-mantra* begins with the words *hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare* followed by *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare*.

(2) In a book called *Kalyāṇa* from Gītā Press, Gorakhpura, the *mahā-mantra* is written in the above mentioned sequence.

(3) Śrī Rāma appeared in Tretā-yuga. Later Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared in Dvāpara-yuga. It is therefore logical to chant *hare rāma* first and then *hare kṛṣṇa*.

This logic is completely without basis.

(1) Earlier publications of the *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad* by Venkateśa Press, Mumbai, clearly state that the *mahā-mantra* begins with *hare kṛṣṇa* and not with *hare rāma*. These earlier publications are still preserved in older libraries of Kolkata and Jaipur.
(2) *Kalyāṇa*, published by Gītā Press, Gorakhpura, is not a bona fide proof with which to support the above perspective.
(3) The fact that Tretā-yuga is followed by Dvāpara-yuga has no effect on the eternal *mahā-mantra*. The *mahā-mantra* is beyond all *yugas* and time.

This topic can be understood by citing the *Ananta-saṁhitā*, which contains the *mahā-mantra* for deliverance from the material world (*tāraka-brahma mahā-mantra*) in each of the four *yugas*[1]. [The word *tāraka* means "to deliver", or "to take across".] Thus, associated with every *yuga* is a specific *mantra*. By chanting it, one can cross the ocean of birth and death.

1 *Yuga* – one of the four ages of the universe, which differ in length and which rotate like calendar months. [© Bhaktivedanta Book Trust]

Satya-yuga:

nārāyaṇa-parā vedāh
nārāyaṇa-parākṣarāḥ
nārāyaṇa-parā-muktiḥ
nārāyaṇa-parā-gatiḥ

Nārāyaṇa is declared as the Supreme in all the Vedas. Nārāyaṇa is the supreme combination of all letters. Realization of Nārāyaṇa is the supreme liberation. Nārāyaṇa is the supreme goal of life.

Tretā-yuga:

rāma nārāyaṇānanta
mukunda madhusūdana
kṛṣṇa keśava kaṁsāre
hare vaikuṇṭha vāmana

O Rāma! O Nārāyaṇa! O Ananta! O Mukunda! O Madhusūdana! O Kṛṣṇa! O Keśava! O Kaṁsāri! O Hari! O Vaikuṇṭha! O Vāmana!

Dvāpara-yuga:

hare murāre madhu-kaiṭabhāre
gopāla govinda mukunda śaure
yajñeśa nārāyaṇa kṛṣṇa viṣṇo
nirāśrayaṁ māṁ jagadīśa rakṣa

O Hari, Murāri, Madhu-Kaiṭabhāri, Gopāla, Govinda, Mukunda, Śauri, Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu! O Jagadīśa,

Lord of the universe, please protect me! I have no other shelter but You.

Kali-yuga:

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma
rāma rāma hare hare

The *Ananta-saṁhitā* states:

ṣoḍaśaitāni nāmāni
dvātriṁśad varṇakāni hi
kalau yuge mahā-mantraḥ
sammato jīva-tāraṇe

Hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare. This *harināma mahā-mantra* consists of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables. In Kali-yuga this *mantra* can deliver all living entities.

Thus, in regard to the third point [that because Śrī Rāma appeared first, it is logical to chant *hare rāma* first and then *hare kṛṣṇa*], it is evident that even in Tretā-yuga, before the appearance of Kṛṣṇa in Dvāpara-yuga, the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa – Mukunda, Madhusūdana, Kṛṣṇa, Keśava and Kaṁsāri – were present in the *mantra* for deliverance.

In conclusion, there is no validity to the arguments and logic given in favour of changing the sequence of the *mahā-mantra*.

Furthermore, these verses of the *Ananta-saṁhitā* clearly state that in Upaniṣads like the *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad*, the *mahā-mantra* is written in the following sequence:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Śrī Nārada received the *mahā-mantra* in this sequence from his *guru*, Lord Brahmā, and this tradition is still practised today in the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava



Śrī Nārada received the *mahā-mantra* in this sequence from his *guru*, Lord Brahmā, and this tradition is still practised today ...

sampradāya. But in other *sampradāyas*, or philosophical schools of thought, this *mahā-mantra* does not descend [from *guru* to disciple] through the *guru-paramparā*, and therefore its secret and sequence are unknown to persons in those *sampradāyas*. It is no wonder that the sequence of the *mahā-mantra* ends up reversed and beginning with *hare rāma*.

Other bona fide scriptures give evidence regarding the intrinsic nature (*svarūpa*) of the *mahā-mantra*:

> *śiṣyasyodaṅmukha-sthasya*
> *harer nāmāni ṣoḍaśa*
> *saṁśrāvyaiva tato dadyān*
> *mantraṁ trai-lokya-maṅgalam*
>
> Before initiating a disciple into the *gopāla-mantra*, which brings auspiciousness to the three worlds, *śrī gurudeva* is to recite the *hare kṛṣṇa mantra* consisting of sixteen names. To receive this *gopāla-mantra*, the disciple must sit facing north and receive the *mantra* in his right ear.

In scriptures such as the *Brahma-yāmala*, Lord Śiva describes the form (*svarūpa*) of the *mahā-mantra*:

> *hariṁ vinā nāsti kiñcit pāpa-nistārakaṁ kalau*
> *tasmāl lokoddhāraṇārthaṁ harināma prakāśayet*
>
> *sarvatra mucyate loko mahā-pāpāt kalau yuge*
>
> *hare-kṛṣṇa-pada-dvandvaṁ kṛṣṇeti ca pada-dvayam*
> *tathā hare-pada-dvandvaṁ hare-rāma iti dvayam*

tad-ante ca mahā-devi! rāma rāma dvayaṁ vadet
hare hare tato brūyād harināma samuddharet

mahā-mantraṁ ca kṛṣṇasya sarva-pāpa-praṇāśakam iti

O Mahā-devī, just see! In Kali-yuga there is no easier way to eradicate sins than to chant the holy name (*śrī harināma*). Therefore, in order to deliver the general populace, it is essential to propagate *śrī harināma* among them. The people in Kali-yuga can be easily liberated from the greatest of sins by performing *saṅkīrtana* of this *mahā-mantra*. To chant the *mahā-mantra*, first chant *hare kṛṣṇa* twice, then chant *kṛṣṇa* twice, then *hare* twice. After that, chant *hare rāma* twice, then *rāma* twice and again, *hare* twice. One should chant, and perform *saṅkīrtana* etc., of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *mahā-mantra*, which destroys all sins.

This is described in these two stanzas.

The *Rādhā-tantra* states:

śṛṇu mātar mahā-māye! viśva-bīja-svarūpiṇi!
hari-nāmno mahāmāye! kramaṁ vada sureśvari!

A devotee is praying: O Viśva-bīja-svarūpiṇi (seed of the universe)! Sureśvari (you who are worshipable by the demigods)! Mahāmāyā (personification of the deluding potency)! Mātā (Mother)! Please hear my prayer and explain to me the sequence of the *mahā-mantra*.

In response to this, Devī says:

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

dvātriṁśad akṣarāṇy eva kalau nāmāni sarvadam
etan mantraṁ suta-śreṣṭha! prathamaṁ śṛṇuyān naraḥ

O best among sons, the *mahā-mantra* for Kali-yuga bestows all perfection. This *mahā-mantra*, the sacred names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is composed of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables: *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*. Therefore, a person who desires his own welfare should first hear this *mahā-mantra* from his *gurudeva*.

In the same *Rādhā-tantra*, Tripurā-devī also suggests:

hari-nāmnā vinā putra! dīkṣā ca viphalā bhavet
guru-deva-mukhāc chrutvā harināma parākṣaram

brāhmaṇa-kṣatra-viṭ-śūdrāḥ śrutvā nāma parākṣaram
dīkṣāṁ kuryuḥ suta-śreṣṭha! mahā-vidyā-su sundara!

O best among sons, you are conversant with the greatest knowledge. Please look; if you hear the *gopāla-mantra* from *śrī gurudeva* before hearing the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* from him, the results of the *gopāla-mantra* will become void. Therefore, persons of all sections of society (*varṇas*), such as the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*, must first hear this *mahā-mantra* from *śrī gurudeva* before they accept initiation into the *gopāla-mantra*.

The *Padma Purāṇa* also states:

> *dvātriṁśad akṣaraṁ mantraṁ nāma ṣoḍaśakānvitam*
> *prajapan vaiṣṇavo nityaṁ rādhā-kṛṣṇa-sthalaṁ labhet*
>
> Any Vaiṣṇava who constantly chants the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*, which is endowed with sixteen names consisting of thirty-two syllables, will certainly attain the supreme abode of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

In the *Rādhā-hṛdaya-khaṇḍa* of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, Romaharṣaṇa Sūta prays to Śrī Vedavyāsa as follows:

> *yat tvayā kīrtitaṁ nātha!*
> *hari-nāmeti saṁjñitam*
> *mantraṁ brahma-padaṁ siddhi-*
> *karaṁ tad vada no vibho!*
>
> O Vibhu (Great One)! O Prabhu (Lord)! Please instruct me on the intrinsic form of the transcendental *mantra*, which consists of the all-spiritual names of Śrī Hari, the bestower of all perfections.

In reply, Śrī Vedavyāsa gives the following instruction:

> *grahaṇād yasya mantrasya dehī brahma-mayo bhavet*
> *sadyaḥ pūtaḥ surā-po 'pi sarva-siddhi-yuto bhavet*
> *tad ahaṁ te 'bhidhāsyāmi mahā-bhāgavato hy asi*

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

iti ṣoḍaśakaṁ nāmnāṁ tri-kāla-kalmaṣāpaham
nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarva-vedeṣu vidyate

O my son, I will certainly instruct you in that *mahā-mantra*. By accepting it, a person in the bodily conception of life can be spiritualized; even a drunkard can quickly become purified and attain all perfection. I will certainly instruct you because you are a *mahā-bhāgavata* and a suitable candidate. The sixteen word *mahā-mantra*, *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare*, *hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*, can destroy all of the the sins committed in the three worlds. For achieving liberation from bondage, the four Vedas do not mention a method superior to the chanting of this *mahā-mantra*.

Ananta-saṁhitā also states:

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

ṣoḍaśaitāni nāmāni dvā-triṁśad varṇakāni hi
kalau yuge mahā-mantraḥ sammato jīva-tāraṇe

utsṛjyaitan mahā-mantraṁ ye tv anyat kalpitaṁ padam
mahā-nāmeti gāyanti te śāstra-guru-laṅghinaḥ

It is the *hare kṛṣṇa mantra*, which is composed of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables, that is the

> supreme *mantra* for delivering the souls in Kali-yuga. All revealed scriptures accept this *mantra* to be famous as the *mahā-mantra*. Therefore those who neglect this *mahā-mantra* and accept and propagate any other *mantra* (such as *nitāi gaura rādhe syāma*, *hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma* or *śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma śrī rādhe govinda*) as the *mahā-mantra*, due to their own imagination or the imagination of others, disobey *guru* and scripture.

If someone asks, "Why is this sixteen word *hare kṛṣṇa mantra* the great, or *mahā*, *mantra*?" then the following answer is given.

"Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has innumerable holy names, but His other names cannot equal the name Hari, which protects us from imminent sins, great misfortune and ignorance. There is no name equal to the name of Kṛṣṇa in the matter of bestowing *prema*, and there is no name equal to Rāma in the matter of bestowing liberation (crossing the ocean of material existence). The *mahā-mantra* is composed of these three primary names. Moreover, these sixteen names are a form of address. Affixes such as *oṁ*, *namaḥ*, *klīṁ*, *svāhā*, etc., are not added [required] here. For this reason it is called the *mahā-mantra*."

The *Sanat-kumāra-saṁhitā* states:

> *hare kṛṣṇau dvir āvṛttau kṛṣṇa tādṛk tathā hare*
> *hare rāma tathā rāma tathā tādṛk hare punaḥ*
>
> *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare*
> *hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*

First chant *hare kṛṣṇa* twice, then *kṛṣṇa* twice, followed by *hare* twice. Then chant *hare rāma* twice, *rāma* twice and then *hare* twice. By this we get the *mahā-mantra*, *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*.

Please note that in the *Yajur Veda*, the *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad* also describes the intrinsic form and glories of the *mahā-mantra* in this way:

> *hariḥ oṁ. dvāparānte nārado brahmāṇaṁ jagāma, kathaṁ bhagavan! gāṁ paryaṭan kaliṁ santareyam iti. sa hovāca brahmā sādhu pṛṣto 'smi sarva-śruti-rahasyaṁ gopyaṁ tacchṛṇu yena kali-saṁsāraṁ tariṣyasi. bhagavata ādi-puruṣasya nārāyaṇasya nāmoccāraṇa-mātreṇa nirdhūta-kalir bhavati. nāradaḥ punaḥ papraccha. tan-nāma kim iti? sa hovāca hiraṇyagarbhaḥ, "hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare / hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare." iti ṣoḍaśakaṁ nāmnāṁ kali-kalmaṣa-nāśanam. nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarva-vedeṣu dṛśyate. iti ṣoḍaśa-kalāvṛtasya jīvasya-āvaraṇa-vināśanam. tataḥ prakāśate paraṁ brahma meghāpāye ravi-raśmi-maṇḍalīveti. punar*

nāradaḥ papraccha. bhagavan! ko 'sya vidhir iti? sa hovāca nāsya vidhir iti. sarvadā śūcir aśucir vā paṭhan brahmaṇaḥ sa-lokatāṁ samīpatām sa-rūpa tāṁ sāyujyatām iti.

At the end of Dvāpara-yuga, Śrī Nārada went to Śrī Brahmā. After offering his obeisances, he inquired: O Lord, how, while wandering about on this earth planet, can I cross beyond the influence of this age of Kali?

Lord Brahmā replied: O son, you have asked an excellent question. Please hear the most confidential secret in the entire Vedas, knowing which you can easily transcend the influence of Kali. Just by one's utterance of the name of that Original Person (*ādi-puruṣa*), who is Bhagavān Śrī Nārāyaṇa (Kṛṣṇa), the personality of Kali-yuga begins to tremble.

Nārada further inquired: Which name of Śrī Bhagavān is that? What is its instrinsic form (*svarūpa*)?

In reply Brahmā said: *Hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*. This *mahā-mantra*, composed of sixteen names, can completely destroy all the impurities of the age of Kali. A superior spiritual practice does not appear in the entire Vedas. The *mahā-mantra* destroys the sixteen coverings of the soul, which means that it can destroy the five gross elements (*pañca-bhūta*) and the eleven senses that cover the living entity. Then, just like the sun whose rays shine brightly when the covering of clouds is removed, the Lord reveals Himself to the living entity.

Śrī Nārada then asked: O Lord, what are the rules and regulations for chanting this *mahā-mantra*?

Lord Brahmā said: There are no rules and regulations for chanting this *mahā-mantra*. Anyone can chant it in a pure or impure state. Moreover, by clearly pronouncing this *mahā-mantra*, one can attain the five types of liberation, or its secondary results, such as achieving equal bodily features as the Lord (*sārūpya*), living on the same planet with the Lord (*sālokya*), possessing opulence like that of the Lord (*sārṣṭi*), being the Lord's personal associate (*sāmīpya*), and merging with the Lord's effulgence (*sāyujya*). Not only that, the primary result of chanting the *mahā-mantra* is the attainment of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, the fifth goal of human life (*pañcama puruṣārtha*).

This subject matter is presented in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.38-86, Madhya-līlā 25.147 and 192, and Antya-līlā 3.177, 7.104 and 20.11.

Śrī Bhakti-candrika, *Saptama Paṭala* states:

atha mantra-varaṁ vakṣye dvātrimśad akṣarā 'nvitam
sarva-pāpa-praśamanaṁ sarva-durvāsanā 'nalam

This *mahā-mantra* is endowed with thirty-two syllables and can destroy all sins. It is like fire, burning all evil habits.

catur-varga-pradaṁ saumyaṁ bhakti-daṁ prema-pūrvakam
durbuddhi-haraṇaṁ śuddha sattva-buddhi-pradāyakam

It bestows religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*) and liberation (*mokṣa*). Its beautiful form (*svarūpa*) is capable of stealing one's foolish, ignorant mentality. It is the giver of pure spiritual intelligence and it bestows the symptoms of *prema-bhakti*.

sarvārādhyaṁ sarva-sevyaṁ sarveṣāṁ kāma-pūrakam
sarvādhikāra-samyuktaṁ sarva-lokaika-bāndhavam

It is worshipable and worthy of being served by all. *Śrī nāma* fulfils everyone's desires. All are qualified to serve this *mahā-mantra*, meaning all are qualified to perform *saṅkīrtana* of the *mahā-mantra*. Of all well-wishers, this *mahā-mantra* is prominent.

sarvākarsaṇa-samyuktaṁ duṣṭa-vyādhi-vināśanam
dīkṣā-vidhi-vihīnaṁ ca kālākāla-vivajitam

It is endowed with the potency to attract all. It is the destroyer of all afflictions. It does not depend on the rules and regulations of *dīkṣā* etc., and it is not restricted by time.

vāṇ-mātreṇarcitaṁ bāhya-pūjā-vidhy-anapekṣakam
jihvā-sparśana-mātreṇa sarveṣāṁ phala-dāyakam
deśa-kālāniyamitaṁ sarva-vādi-susammatam

The *mahā-mantra* is worshipped just by saying it. No external paraphernalia is required. It is capable of giving results simply by its contact with the tongue, without considering the rules pertaining to time, place and circumstance. For this reason, members of all philosophical schools accept it.

Also the Paippalāda-śākhā of the *Atharva Veda* states:

sva-nāma-mūla-mantreṇa sarvaṁ hlādayati vibhuḥ
sa eva mūla-mantraṁ japati harir iti kṛṣṇa iti rāma iti

That *mahā-mantra*, which is composed of the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the origin of all incarnations of God (*avatāras*), is making everyone joyful. He Himself, in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, audibly chants the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*, the source of all *mantras*.

The following verse explains the result of performing *kīrtana*, etc., of the *mahā-mantra*:

mantro guhyaḥ paramo bhakti-vedyaḥ
nāmāny aṣṭāv aṣṭa ca śobhanāni
tāni nityaṁ ye japanti dhīrās
te vai māyām atitaranti nānye
paramaṁ mantraṁ parama-rahasyaṁ nityaṁ āvartayati

The *mahā-mantra* is most confidential and can only be understood through *bhakti*. It contains eight charming

> pairs of names of the Supreme Lord, such as *hare kṛṣṇa* and *hare rāma*. It is thus certain that intelligent people who chant these names continuously will become free from material illusion (*māyā*), not others. That is why intelligent persons always chant, perform *kīrtana* of and remember the *mahā-mantra*.

In the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (Uttara-khaṇḍa, Chapter Six), King Vṛṣbhānu prays to the sage Kratu, "O lord, if you are favourably disposed toward me, please give me in charity the names of Śrī Hari." That very moment, the magnanimous sage Kratu gave him the sixteen names, *hare kṛṣṇa* etc. Thus an intelligent person should always, everywhere, keep chanting this *mahā-mantra*: "*nāma-saṅkīrtanaṁ tasmāt sadā kāryaṁ vipaścitā* – the holy name may be chanted during all activities."

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Mahā-mantra

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who inaugurated the chanting of *śrī harināma-saṅkīrtana*, instructs the devotees, also, to perform *saṅkīrtana* of the *mahā-mantra*.

Śrī Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya says:

viṣaṇṇa-cittān kali-ghora-bhītān
saṁvīkṣya gauro hari-nāma-mantram

svayaṁ dadau bhakta-janān samādiśat
saṅkīrtayadhvaṁ nanu nṛtya-vādyaiḥ

Upon seeing the unhappy and fearful living entities of this age of Kali, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, out of His causeless compassion, mercifully distributed the *mahā-mantra* as charity and instructed the devotees: O devotees, you should collectively perform *saṅkīrtana* by singing and dancing with musical instruments.

harer nāma-prasādena nistaret pātakī janaḥ
upadeṣṭā svayaṁ kṛṣṇa caitanyo jagad-īśvaraḥ

kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devena hari-nāma-prakāśitam
yena kenāpi tat-prāptaṁ dhanyo 'sau loka-pāvanaḥ

By the mercy of the holy name, a sinner can also be delivered. This is because the instructor of the holy name is the Lord of the universe, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It therefore follows that, any person who receives this holy name, which has been manifested by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself, becomes most fortunate. Furthermore, they can also purify others by giving them their association.

The great poet Śrīla Kavi Karṇapūra states in his epic poem, *Śrī Caitanya-carita* (11.54):

tataḥ śrī-gaurāṅgaḥ samavadad atīva-pramudito
hare kṛṣṇety uccair vada muhur iti śrī-maya-tanuḥ
tato 'sau tat procya prativalita-romāñca-lalito
rudaṁs tat-tat-karmārabhata bahu-duḥkhair vidalitaḥ

(At the time of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *sannyāsa* ceremony, the barber who had been asked to shave Him felt morose and perturbed. Although he held the razor in his hand, he could not bring himself to shave off Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's beautiful curly hair. Instead he simply wept.) Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, whose eternal form is fully immersed in the transcendental sentiments of Śrī Rādhā, became deeply pleased and said: O Barber! You must constantly and loudly chant

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare.

Upon hearing these instructions from Śrī Mahāprabhu, that barber began to chant, and although he continued to weep in great distress, he proceeded to shave off Mahāprabhu's hair. He became so absorbed in chanting the *mahā-mantra* that his bodily hairs stood erect (*romāñca*, or *pulaka*).

Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala states:

bāhu prasāriyā prabhu brāhmaṇe tulilā
tāra ghare bhakti-bhare gāna āraṁbhilā

Mahāprabhu, with His arms outstretched, lifted the *brāhmaṇa* up. His heart full of *bhakti*, He started to sing.

brāhmaṇera ghara yena haila vṛndāvana
harināma śunibāre āise sarva-jana

It seemed as if the house of the *brāhmaṇa* had become Vṛndāvana. A multitude of people gathered to hear and chant the *mahā-mantra*.

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

(All of them together started performing *kīrtana* of the *mahā-mantra*): *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare.*

Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala also states:

hare kṛṣṇa nāma prabhu bale nirantara

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is always uttering the names *hare kṛṣṇa*.

prasanna śrī-mukhe hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa bali
vijaya hailā gauracandra kutūhalī

The delightful Gauracandra, His divine face full of transcendental happiness, became victorious chanting *hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa*.

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa bali' prema-sukhe
pratyakṣa hailā āsi' advaita-sammukhe

Once, while uttering *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa*, Śrīman Mahāprabhu, fully immersed in the bliss of *prema*, appeared before Advaita Ācārya.

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (*Madhya-khaṇḍa* 6.117) states:

jaya jaya 'hare kṛṣṇa'—mantrera prakāśa
jaya jaya nija-bhakti-grahaṇa-vilāsa

All victory to the manifestation of the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* (when Bhagavān accepts the mood of a devotee). All glories, all glories to the blissful pastimes performed by accepting *bhakti* to Him.

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (*Madhya-khaṇḍa* 23.74–78) also states:

prabhu bole,—kṛṣṇa-bhakti hauk sabāra
kṛṣṇa-nāma guṇa vai nā baliha āra

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: May all attain *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. Do not utter anything except Kṛṣṇa's names and qualities.

āpane sabāre prabhu kare upadeśe
kṛṣṇa-nāma mahā-mantra śunaha hariṣe

Mahāprabhu Himself is instructing everyone with these words: All of you joyfully hear this *mahā-mantra*, which is composed of Kṛṣṇa's names.

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

prabhu bale kahilāṅ ei mahāmantra
ihā jap' giyā sabe kariyā nirbandha

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: I have spoken this *mahā-mantra* for all of you. Now you decide a fixed number of names to chant, and chant regularly.

ihā haite sarva-siddhi haibe sabāra
sarva-kṣaṇa bala' ithe vidhi nāhi āra

You will gain all perfections through this. Always keep chanting it. There is no other procedure except for this.

ki śayane, ki bhojane, kibā jāgaraṇe
ahar-niśa cinta kṛṣṇa, balaha vadane

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (*Madhya-khaṇḍa* 28.28)

While sleeping, eating or awake, at all times remember Kṛṣṇa and chant His name.

sarvadā śrī-mukhe 'hare kṛṣṇa hare hare
balite ānanda-dhārā niravadhi jhare

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (*Antya-khaṇḍa* 1.199)

Uttering the names *hare kṛṣṇa hare hare* with His lotus mouth, Mahāprabhu shed incessant tears of ecstasy from His eyes.

kali-yuga-dharma haya nāma-saṅkīrtana
cāri-yuge cāri-dharma jīvera kāraṇa

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (*Ādi-khaṇḍa* 14.137)

The *dharma*, or principle religious occupation, of Kali-yuga is *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. The four types of *dharma* prescribed within the four *yugas*, respectively, are solely for the auspiciousness of the *jīvas*.

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (*Ādi-khaṇḍa* 14.139–143) states:

ataeva kali-yuge nāma-yajña sāra
āra kona dharma kaile nāhi haya pāra

In Kali-yuga, the essence of sacrifice (*yajña*) is to chant the holy names. Following any other religious process



Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: May all attain *kṛṇa-bhakti*.
Do not utter anything except Kṛṣṇa's names and qualities.

will not take anyone across the ocean of material existence.

rātri-dina nāma laya khāite śuite
tāṅhāra mahimā vede nāhi pāre dite

Even the Vedas cannot fully describe the glories of a person who chants the names of the Lord day and night, even while eating and sleeping.

śuna miśra, kali-yuge nāhi tapa-yajña
yei jana bhaje kṛṣṇa, tāṅra mahā-bhāgya

O Tapana Miśra, listen. In the age of Kali, there is not much to be gained from the performance of austerities, fire sacrifice and other procedures, but that person who performs the *bhajana* (worship) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is supremely fortunate.

ataeva gṛhe tumi kṛṣṇa bhaja giyā
kuṭināṭi parihari' ekānta haiyā

Therefore, you should return to your home and perform *bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Leaving all duplicitous behaviour, you should take the association of devotees.

sādhya-sādhana-tattva ye-kichu sakala
hari-nāma-saṅkīrtane milibe sakala

Just by performing *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, one will gain entrance into all else, such as philosophical truths

regarding the goal of life and the process of worship (*sādhya-sādhana-tattva*).

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

ei śloka nāma bali' laya mahā-mantra
ṣola-nāma battiśa-akṣara ei tantra

The subject of this *śloka* is the sixteen names consisting of thirty-two syllables, which are all in the vocative case. This is what is known as the *mahā-mantra*.

sādhite sādhite yabe premāṅkura habe
sādhya-sādhana-tattva jānibā se tabe

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (*Ādi-khaṇḍa* 14.145–147)

If you continually chant the holy name, the seed of *prema* will sprout and you will come to understand the truth about perfection and the truth about the process by which perfection is attained (*sādhya-sādhana-tattva*).

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta states:

kṛṣṇa-nāma-mahā-mantrera ei ta' svabhāva
yei jape, tāra kṛṣṇe upajaye bhāva

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 7.83)

The nature of the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* is such that when a person chants it, his heart immediately develops loving sentiments for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

kṛṣṇa-viṣayaka premā—parama puruṣārtha
yāra āge tṛṇa-tulya cāri puruṣārtha

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 7.84)

When the four goals of human life – *dharma* (perfectly performing one's occupational duty), *artha* (accumulating wealth), *kāma* (satisfying one's desire for sense pleasure) and *mokṣa* (attaining liberation) – stand before pure love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prema*), the fifth and topmost goal, they appear as insignificant as straw.

pañcama puruṣārtha—premānandāmṛta-sindhu
brahmādi ānanda yāra nahe eka bindu

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 7.85)

The fifth, supreme, goal (*kṛṣṇa-prema*) is a nectarean ocean of the bliss of *prema*. The other goals, like the pleasure derived from the featureless aspect of the Absolute (*brahma*), do not compare to even a drop of this ocean.

kṛṣṇa-nāmera phala—'premā', sarva-śāstre kaya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 7.86)

The conclusion of all scripture is that *prema* is the fruit of chanting the names of Kṛṣṇa.

kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra
nāma haite haya sarva-jagat-nistāra

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 17.22)

In this age of Kali, Kṛṣṇa has descended in the form of these names. Certainly, it is by these names that the entire world is delivered.

avatari' caitanya kaila dharma pracāraṇa
kali-kāle dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Madhya-līlā* 11.98)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has descended in this age of Kali to propagate the religious process of the age, chanting the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

saṅkīrtana-yajñe tāṅre kare ārādhana
sei ta sumedhā āra—kali-hata-jana

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Madhya-līlā* 11.99)

That person who worships Bhagavān by performing *saṅkīrtana* is considered to possess high intelligence. But others, who do not perform *saṅkīrtana*, are understood to have had their intelligence destroyed by Kali.

nirantara kara kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana
helāya 'mukti' pābe, pābe prema-dhana

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Madhya-līlā* 25.154)

Constantly chant the sacred names of Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-nāma*). Even by chanting *nāmābhāsa*, or a semblance of the holy name, you will very easily achieve liberation. Eventually, upon chanting the pure names, you will receive the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love for Kṛṣṇa.

eka 'nāmābhāse' tomāra pāpa-doṣa yābe
āra 'nāma' laite kṛṣṇa-caraṇa pāibe

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Madhya-līlā* 25.199)

Just start to chant the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*. Then, when you can chant at the stage of *nāmābhāsa*, the entirety of your sinful reactions will be removed. And when you can chant *hare kṛṣṇa* purely, you will attain the shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

nāmera phale kṛṣṇa-pade prema upajaya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Antya-līlā* 3.178)

The fruit of chanting the holy name without offence is that *prema*, or ecstatic love for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, will awaken.

kali-kālera dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Antya-līlā* 7.11)

In Kali-yuga the only religious duty is to chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

harṣe prabhu kahena,—śuna svarūpa-rāma rāya
nāma-saṅkīrtana—kalau parama upāya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Antya-līlā* 20.8)

In jubilation Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said: My dear Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya, please hear Me. Chanting the holy names (*nāma-saṅkīrtana*) is the supreme process in Kali-yuga.

saṅkīrtana-yajñe kalau kṛṣṇa-ārādhana
sei ta' sumedhā pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Antya-līlā* 20.9)

In this Age of Kali, the process of worshiping Kṛṣṇa is to perform sacrifice by chanting the holy name of the Lord. One who does so is certainly very intelligent, and he attains shelter at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.[2]

nāma-saṅkīrtane haya sarvānartha-nāśa
sarva-śubhodaya, kṛṣṇe-premera ullāsa

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Antya-līlā* 20.11)

By chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, one can eradicate all *anarthas*, or desires that are an impediment to devotion. And by the splendour of *śrī-kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all good fortune is awakened.

khāite śuite yathā tathā nāma laya
kāla-deśa-niyama nāhi, sarva-siddhi haya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Antya-līlā* 20.18)

Regardless of time or place, one who chants the name attains all perfection, either while eating, sleeping, standing or sitting. There are no restrictions in regards to time, place and so forth.

2 Translation by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda
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ei-mata hañā yei kṛṣṇa-nāma laya
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caraṇe tāṅra prema upajaya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Antya-līlā* 20.26)

A person will definitely awaken *prema* for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa if he chants His name like this.

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī states in the introduction to his commentary on the *mahā-mantra*:

ekadā kṛṣṇa-virahād dhyāyantī priya-saṅgamam
mano-vāṣpa-nirāsārthaṁ jalpatīdaṁ muhur muhuḥ

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

yāni nāmāni virahe jajāpa vārṣabhānavī
tānye va tad-bhāva-yukto gauracandro jajāpa ha

Once, Śrīmatī Rādhikā was feeling overwhelming distress due to separation from Her beloved Śyāmasundara, and She meditated upon meeting Him. To remove Her fire of separation, She began to chant this *mahā-mantra*, *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare*, *hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is absorbed in the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, also chanted these names.

śrī-caitanya-mukhod gīrṇā hare kṛṣṇeti varṇakāḥ
majjayanto jagat premṇi vijayantāṁ tadāhvayāḥ

Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta (1.4)



Śrīmatī Rādhikā

Thus, Kṛṣṇa's sixteen names consisting of thirty-two syllables, the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*, came from the all-auspicious mouth of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. May this *mahā-mantra*, which makes the entire universe absorbed in *kṛṣṇa-prema*, be graciously and conspicuously present above all else. *Jaya ho*! *Jaya ho*! Let the *mahā-mantra* be completely victorious!

Commentaries on the Mahā-mantra

'hariḥ' 'krsnaḥ' 'rāma' iti nāma-trayātmako 'mahā-mantraḥ'
tasmin saṁbodhanātmakāni trīṇi nāmāni santi

The *mahā-mantra* consists of the three names – Hari, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. Each name is in the vocative case, meaning it is a direct address, a 'calling out'.

Elaboration on the sweetness of the name

~ Mādhurya-mayī ~

An elaboration on the sweetness of these three names is as follows:

vijñāpya bhagavat-tattvaṁ cid-ghanānanda-vigraham
haraty avidyāṁ tat-kāryam ato harir iti smṛtaḥ

By providing a clear understanding of the conclusive truth about His nature, Śrī Bhagavān, the embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss, destroys *avidyā*, or

the absence of knowledge, and its concomitant result, ignorance. Therefore the name Hari (one who takes away) is an appropriate name to remember Him.

ānandaika-sukhaḥ śrīmān śyāmaḥ kamala-locanaḥ
gokulānando nanda-nandanaḥ kṛṣṇa īryate

It is only the lotus-eyed Nanda-nandana, Śrī Śyāma-sundara, the nectarean embodiment of bliss, who bestows bliss to the residents of Gokula and who is referred to as Kṛṣṇa (the all-attractive one).

vaidagdhī sāra-sarvasvaṁ mūrta-līlādhidaivatam
śrī-rādhāṁ ramaya nityaṁ rāma ity abhidhīyate

Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa (*Uttara-khaṇḍa* 6.55)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *līlā-mūrtimān-vigraha* – the personification of transcendental pastimes, or the presiding deity of such pastimes. He is the crest-jewel of all those who are *rasika* (who can fully relish transcendental mellows), and He is supremely clever in all arts. Because He eternally makes Śrīmatī Rādhikā enjoy amorous pastimes, in other words, because He gives Her pleasure, He is also known as Rāma.

Elaboration on the opulence within the name

~ Aiśvarya-mayī ~

harita tri-vidhaṁ tāpaṁ janma-koṭi-śatodbhavam
pāpaṁ ca smaratāṁ yasmāt tasmād dharir iti smṛtaḥ

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known as Hari because He steals, from those devotees who remember Him, the three-fold miseries[3] of countless births and the sinful activities performed by the body, mind and words.

kṛṣir bhū-vācakaḥ śabdo ṇaś ca nirvṛti vācakaḥ
tayor aikyaṁ paraṁ brahma kṛṣṇa ity abhidhīyate

The verbal root *kṛṣ* means "all attractive" and the word *ṇa* means "blissful". The combination of these syllables refers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of bliss, the all-attractive Parabrahma.

ramante yogino 'nante satyānande cid-ātmani
iti rāma-padenāsau paraṁ brahmābhidīyate

Yogīs on the transcendental platform derive great joy by meditating upon Him as the infinite form of supreme bliss (*nityānanda-svarūpa*), and as He who has a transcendental form (*cinmaya-svarūpa*). For this reason, that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also called Rāma (the supreme enjoyer).

3 Those miseries arising from one's own body and mind, miseries inflicted by others and miseries given by the demigods in the form of draught, flood, famine etc.

The commentary that explains how the Divine Couple can be remembered within the name

~ Yugala-smaraṇa-mayī ~

mano harita kṛṣṇasya kṛṣṇāhlāda-svarūpiṇī
tato harā śrī-rādhaiva tasyāḥ saṁbodhanaṁ hare

Śrī Rādhā is the pleasure potency (*hlādinī-śakti*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is She who is known as Harā (one who steals away) because She can captivate Kṛṣṇa's mind. Harā becomes Hare in the vocative case.

apagṛhya trapāṁ dharmaṁ dhairyaṁ mānaṁ vraja-striyaḥ
veṇunā karṣati gṛhāt tena kṛṣṇo 'bhidhīyate

By the sound of His flute, Vraja-rāja-kumāra, the young prince of Vraja, steals away the natural shyness, sense of *dharma* (religiosity), pride and patience of the cowherd damsels, and attracts them away from their households. Therefore, He is known as Kṛṣṇa.

ramayaty aniśaṁ rūpa lāvaṇyair vraja-yoṣitām
manaḥ pañcendriyānīha rāmas tasmāt prakīrtitaḥ

That same Kṛṣṇa, with the extraordinary beauty of His form (*rūpa-lāvaṇya*), always surcharges the minds and senses of the cowherd damsels with ever-increasing bliss. For this reason He is glorified as Rāma.

Commentary on the mahā-mantra by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī

sarva-ceto-haraḥ kṛṣṇas tasya cittaṁ hartay asau
vaidagdhī-sāra-vistārair ato rādhā harā mṛta (1)

Hare – Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra's transcendental beauty captivates the minds of all, but Śrīmatī Rādhikā captivates even the mind of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by exercising Her unrivalled cleverness. Therefore, She is known as Harā. Harā in the singular vocative case is Hare.[4]

karṣati svīya-lāvaṇya-muralī-kala-niḥsvanaiḥ
śrī-rādhāṁ mohana-guṇā 'laṅkṛtaḥ kṛṣṇa īryate (2)

Kṛṣṇa – Śrī Hari, who is adorned with qualities that bewilder the three worlds, constantly attracts Śrīmatī Rādhikā by His youthful beauty and the sweet sound of His flute. Therefore, He is called Kṛṣṇa [the all-attractive one].

śrūyate nīyate rāse hariṇā hariṇekṣṇā
ekākinī rahaḥ-kuñje hareyaṁ tena kathyate (3)

Hare – Śrī Kṛṣṇa kidnapped the doe-eyed Śrīmatī Rādhikā, taking Her alone to a secluded forest bower,

4 According to Sanskrit grammar, the last letter in a name may change in the vocative case. In the *mahā-mantra*, Harā becomes Hare. The names Kṛṣṇa and Rāma remain the same.

By the sound of His flute, Vraja-rāja-kumāra, the young prince of Vraja, steals away the natural shyness, sense of *dharma*, pride and patience of the cowherd damsels, and attracts them away from their households. Therefore, He is known as Kṛṣṇa.





away from the *rāsa-maṇḍala*. This has been learned from the words of the most exalted saintly personalities. Therefore, Rādhikā is known as Harā. Harā in its vocative case becomes Hare.

aṅga-śyāmalima-stomaiḥ śyāmalī-kata-kāñcanaḥ
ramate rādhayā sārdhaṁ ataḥ kṛṣṇo nigadyate (4)

Kṛṣṇa – The magnificent effulgence emanating from His dark limbs can convert Śrī Rādhikā's golden complexion to the lustre of a dark sapphire (*śyāma-varṇa*). That Rādhā-ramaṇa Śyāmasundara is called Kṛṣṇa.

kṛtvāraṇye saraḥ-śreṣṭhaṁ kāntayānumatas tayā
ākṛṣya sarva-tīrthāni taj-jñānāt kṛṣṇa īryate (5)

Kṛṣṇa – Śrī Hari manifested Śyāma-kuṇḍa, the topmost of all beautiful lakes, in the forest of Vraja near Govardhana. He did this in accordance with the desire of His beloved Śrī Rādhikā, and He attracted all holy places to it. Therefore, learned people who understand this deep secret call Him Kṛṣṇa.

kṛṣyate rādhayā premṇā yamunā-taṭa-kānanam
līlayā lalitaś cāpi dhīraiḥ kṛṣṇa udāhṛtaḥ (6)

Kṛṣṇa – Although His pastimes in the *kuñjas* on the banks of the Yamunā in Vṛndāvana bewilder the

world, the all-attractive *dhīra-lalita-nāyaka*[5] Śrī Hari is attracted by the transcendental *prema* of Śrī Rādhikā, which is celebrated by the name *mahābhāva*. That is why intelligent people call Him Kṛṣṇa.

hṛtavān gokule tiṣṭhann ariṣṭaṁ puṣṭa-puṅgavam
śrī-haris taṁ rasād uccai rāyatīti harā mṛta (7)

Hare – Whilst living in Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa stole away the life force of the strong bull-like demon, Ariṣṭāsura. At that very moment Śrīmatī Rādhikā, in great jubilation, loudly chanted "Hari, Hari!" For this reason, Śrī Rādhā is known as Harā. In the vocative case, Harā is addressed as Hare.

hy aspuṭaṁ rāyati prīti-bhareṇa hari-ceṣṭitam
gāyatīti matā dhīrair harā rasa-vicakṣanaiḥ (8)

Hare – Śrī Rādhikā sings the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in indistinct tones, and sometimes, out of intense affection, She sings loudly. Therefore, learned scholars who are expert in discerning *rasa-tattva* refer to Her as Harā. Harā is addressed as Hare.

rasāveśa-paristratāṁ jahāra muralīṁ hareḥ
hareti kīrtitā devī vipine keli-lampaṭā (9)

5 The *dhīra-lalita-nāyaka* is as attractive as Cupid, ever-youthful, expert at joking, never anxious, controlled by His beloveds' *prema* and expert in loving affairs. He is *rasika*, charming and dexterous.

Hare – In Vṛndāvana, Śrī Rādhikā playfully stole away the flute as it fell from the hands of Śrī Kṛṣṇa while He was immersed in *rasa*. Because She stole away (*jahāra*), Rādhikā-devī is known as Harā. The form of address for Harā is Hare.

govardhana-darī-kuñje pariraṁbha-vicakṣaṇaḥ
śrī-rādhāṁ ramayāmāsa rāmas tena mato hariḥ (10)

Rāma – Śrī Kṛṣṇa is most clever in the art of embracing. He is thus known as Rāma because He wandered with Śrī Rādhikā, playing and enjoying with Her in the cave-like arbours of Govardhana.

hanti duḥkhāni bhaktānāṁ rāti saukhyāni cānvahaṁ
harā devī nigaditā mahā-kāruṇya-śālinī (11)

Hare – Śrī Rādhikā is most merciful. She steals away all the miseries of the devotees and daily bestows happiness upon them. Thus She is known as Harā and is addressed as Hare.

ramate bhajate cetaḥ paramānanda-vāridhau
atreti kathito rāmaḥ śyāma-sundara-vigrahaḥ (12)

Rāma – The minds of the devotees who perform *bhajana* delight in the topmost ocean of bliss, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For this reason the dark complexioned Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known as Rāma.

ramayaty acyutaṁ premṇā nikuñja-vana-mandire
rāmā nigaditā rādhā rāmo yuktas tayā punaḥ (13)

Rāma – In the arbours, Śrīmatī Rādhikā gives joy to Śrī Hari with Her *prema*. Therefore, according to the etymological origin of *ramayati ānandayati* or 'She who gives happiness and bliss', She is called Rāmā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known as Rāma because He unites with Śrī Rādhā, or Rāmā.

rodaniar gokule dāvānalam āśayati hy asau
viśoṣayati tenokto rāmo bhakta-sukhāvaḥ (14)

Rāma – When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, saw all the Vrajavāsīs weeping in Vraja, He swallowed the forest fire, thus giving them great pleasure. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who gives happiness to His *bhaktas*, is called Rāma.

nihantum asurān yāto mathurā-puram ity asau
tadāgam adrahaḥ kāmo yasyāḥ sāsau hareti ca (15)

Hare – Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to Mathurā-purī to kill Kaṁsa and other demons. Afterwards, He returned to Vraja with the desire to meet with Śrī Rādhikā in a solitary place. She attracts Śrī Kṛṣṇa from *dhāmas* like Mathurā and brings Him to Vraja. For this reason She is called Harā (one who steals). The form of address for Harā is Hare.

āgatya duḥkha-hartā yo sarveṣāṁ vrajavāsināṁ
śrī rādhā-hāri-carito hariḥ śrī-nanda-nandanaḥ (16)

Hare – Śrī Nanda-nandana came from Mathurā and Dvārakā to steal away all the miseries of the Vrajavāsīs. That Nanda-nandana, who is endowed with pastimes that captivate the mind of Śrī Rādhikā, is called Hari. The word Hari becomes Hare in the vocative case.

Thus ends the commentary on the mahā-mantra
by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī

Commentary on the mahā-mantra by Śrī Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī

ajñāna-tat-kārya-vināśa-hetoḥ
sukhātmanaḥ śyāma-kiśora-mūrteḥ
śrī-rādhikāyā ramaṇasya puṁsaḥ
smaranti nityaṁ mahatāṁ mahāntaḥ (1)

The topmost devotees, the *mahā-bhāgavatas*, eternally remember the embodiment of bliss and the youthful black complexioned form of Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa, who can destroy ignorance (*avidyā*) as well as the disease of material existence born from it.

vilokya tasmin rasikaṁ kṛtajñaṁ
jitendriyaṁ śāntam ananya-cittam
kṛtārthayante kṛpayā suśiṣyaṁ
pradāya nāma-traya-yukta-padyam (2)

That same *mahā-bhāgavata* who upon seeing their qualified disciple completely full of devotion, attachment and taste for the same Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa, and also recognizing him to be grateful, victorious over the senses, peaceful, undistracted and steady minded, mercifully gives him the verse containing *hare kṛṣṇa*, etc., namely the *mahā-mantra*, which is composed of three names. In this way, they make him successful.

Commentary on the word "Hare" within the mahā-mantra

harir harati pāpāni duṣṭa-cittair api smṛtaḥ
anicchayāpi saṁspṛṣṭo dahatyeva hi pāvakaḥ (3)

Hare – Just as fire burns even if touched by accident, similarly, the Lord can remove all the sins of a person with a wicked mind, regardless of the mood with which he remembers Him. Thus His name is Hari, "He who steals away".

vijñāpya bhagavat-tattvaṁ cid-ghanānanda-vigraham
haraty avidyāṁ tat-kāryam ato harir iti smṛtaḥ (4)

By providing a clear understanding of the conclusive truth about His nature, Śrī Bhagavān, the embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss, destroys *avidyā*, or the absence of knowledge, and its concomitant result, ignorance. Therefore the name Hari (one who takes away) is an appropriate name to remember Him.

athavā sarveṣāṁ sthāvara-jaṅgamādīnāṁ tāpatrayaṁ haratīti hariḥ, yadvā divya-sadguṇa-śravaṇa-kathana-dvārā sarveṣāṁ viśvādīnāṁ mano haratīti, yadvā sva-mādhuryeṇa koṭi-kandarpa-lāvaṇyena sarveṣāṁ avatārādīnāṁ mano haratīti hariḥ, hari-śabdasya-saṁbodhane 'he hare' (5)

He is called Hari because He removes the threefold miseries of all the moving and non-moving living entities. The minds of materially enmeshed living entities are captivated by hearing and chanting His transcendental qualities. Therefore, His name is Hari. By His sweet innate beauty and elegance, which is more enchanting than millions upon millions of Cupids, He captures the minds of all other incarnations. Thus the Prince of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is known as Hari. The vocative form of Hari is Hare.

rāsādi-prema-saukhyārthe harerharati yā manaḥ
harā sā gīyate sadbhir-vṛṣabhānu-sutā parā (6)

svarūpa-prema-vātsalyair-harer-harati yā manaḥ
harā sā kathyate sadbhiḥ śrī-rādhā vṛṣabhānujā (7)

harati śrī-kṛṣṇa manaḥ kṛṣṇāhlāda-svarūpiṇī
ato haretyanenaiva śrī-rādhā parigīyate
ityādinā śrī-rādhā-vācaka-harā-śabdasya saṁbodhane hare (8)

To accomplish the loving pleasure of *rāsa*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā captivates the mind of Kṛṣṇa by Her form, qualities, tenderness and love. Thus, gentle, virtuous

persons talk and sing about the bliss potency (*hlādinī-śakti*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Śrī Rādhā, by using the name Harā. Harā is addressed as Hare.

Commentary on the word "Kṛṣṇa" within the mahā-mantra

kṛṣir bhū-vācakaḥ śabdo, ṇaś ca nirvṛtti-vācakaḥ
tayor aikyaṁ paraṁ brahma, kṛṣṇa ity abhidhīyate (9)

Kṛṣṇa – The verbal root *kṛṣ* means "all-attractive" and *ṇa* means "all-blissful". When combined, they indicate the all-attractive and blissful Parabrahma, known by the name Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam (10)

It is Govinda Himself – who is beginningless and who is the origin of all, the cause of all causes, the personification of eternity, knowledge and bliss and the Supreme Controller – who is known by the name Kṛṣṇa.

ānandaika-sukhaḥ śrīmān śyāmaḥ kamala-locanaḥ
gokulānandano nanda-nandanaḥ kṛṣṇa īryate
kṛṣṇa śabdasya saṁbodhane kṛṣṇa (11)

That one without a second, who is the personification of the elixir of pure bliss and the source of delight for the residents of Gokula, is the lotus-eyed son of Nanda,

Śrī Śyāmasundara (the beautiful dark complexioned one), who is referred to as Kṛṣṇa. The vocative form of the word Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa.

Commentary on the word "Rāma" within the mahā-mantra

rā-śabdoccāraṇāt devi! bahir niryānti pātakāḥ
punaḥ praveśakāle tu makāraśca kapāṭavat (12)

Rāma – Śrī Śaṅkara said to Pārvatī: *He* Devī! By pronouncing the first syllable of the word Rāma (*rā*) all sins leave the body, and when one chants the syllable *ma*, it acts as a door to prevent the sins from re-entering.

ramante yogino 'nante satyānande cidātmani
iti rāmapadenādaḥ paraṁbrahmā 'bhidhīyate (13)

Yogīs rejoice in the pure spiritual, and unlimited Absolute Truth, and the embodiment of bliss. That Parabrahma is known as Rāma.

vaidagdhī sāra-sarvasvaṁ, mūrta-līlādhidaivatam
śrī-rādhāṁ ramyan nityaṁ rāma ity abhidhīyate (14)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the predominating deity of all *rasa*-filled pastimes, the crest-jewel of the clever and the topmost enjoyer of *rasa* (*rasika-śekhara*), eternally gives joy to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. He is thus referred to as Rāma.



Śrī Kṛṣṇa

śrī rādhāyāścittamākṛṣya ramate krīḍatīti rāmaḥ
rāma-śabdasya saṁbodhane rāma
tathā hi krama-dīpikāyāṁ candraṁ prati śrī-kṛṣṇaḥ-
mama nāma-śatenaiva rādhā-nāma saduttamam
yaḥ smarettu sadā rādhāṁ na jāne tasya kiṁ phalam (15)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa further attracts the mind of Śrī Rādhikā and thus enjoys performing pastimes with Her. He is therefore known as Rāma. The vocative form of the word Rāma is Rāma. In the *Krama-dīpikā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Candramā, the moon: Rādhā's name is superior to hundreds of My names. In other words, chanting Śrī Rādhā's name just once is far superior to chanting My names hundreds of times. Even I do not know what benefit awaits that person who always chants and remembers Śrī Rādhā.

Another explanation of each word of the *mahā-mantra* is as follows:

Hare – "*kṛṣṇasya mano haratīti harā rādhā, tasyāḥ saṁbodhanane he hare* – Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who steals the mind of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is called Harā. She is addressed, '*He* Hare!' "

Kṛṣṇa – "*rādhāyā manaḥ karṣatīti kṛṣṇaḥ tasya saṁbodhane he kṛṣṇa* – Kṛṣṇa means He who attracts the mind of Śrī Rādhā. He is addressed, '*He* Kṛṣṇa!' "

Hare – "*kṛṣṇasya loka-lajjā-dhairyādi sarvaṁ haratīti harā rādhā, tasyāḥ saṁbodhane he hare* – Śrī Rādhikā causes Śrī Kṛṣṇa to lose (*hara*) all His shyness, sobriety, patience, modesty, etc. That is why She is known as Harā. She is addressed, '*He* Hare!' "

Kṛṣṇa – "*rādhāyā loka-lajjā-dhairyādi sarvaṁ karṣatīti kṛṣṇaḥ, tasya saṁbodhane he kṛṣṇa* – Śrī Kṛṣṇa attracts Rādhikā in such a way that She loses all Her shyness, reserve, patience, etc. For this reason He is called Kṛṣṇa. He is addressed, '*He* Kṛṣṇa!' "

Kṛṣṇa – "*yatra yatra rādhā tiṣṭhati gacchati vā tatra tatra sā paśyati kṛṣṇo māṁ spṛśati, balāt kañcukādikaṁ sarvaṁ haratīti kṛṣṇaḥ, tasya saṁbodhane he kṛṣṇa* – Wherever Śrī Rādhikā stands or goes, She sees Śrī Kṛṣṇa touching Her and forcibly pulling Her veil. For this reason He is called Kṛṣṇa (all-attractive) and is addressed '*He* Kṛṣṇa!' "

Kṛṣṇa – "*punar harṣatāṁ gamayati vanaṁ karṣatīti kṛṣṇaḥ, tasya saṁbodhane he kṛṣṇa* – He gives pleasure to Śrī Rādhā, who again ventures to the forest of Vṛndāvana, being irresistibly attracted by the sound of His flute. For this reason He is called Kṛṣṇa and addressed '*He* Kṛṣṇa!' "

Hare – "*yatra kṛṣṇo gacchati tiṣṭhati vā tatra tatra paśyati rādhā mamāgre pārśve sarvatra tiṣṭhati viharati iti harā rādhā,*

tasyāḥ saṁbodhane he hare – Śrī Kṛṣṇa sees Śrī Rādhā next to Him wherever He stands or moves – in every direction – and hence His consciousness becomes captivated by Her. Therefore, She is called Harā. She is addressed, '*He* Hare!' "

Hare – "*punas taṁ kṛṣṇaṁ harati sva-sthānam abhisārayatīti harā rādhā, tasyāḥ saṁbodhane he hare* – She again steals Śrī Kṛṣṇa away to a secret rendezvous hinted at by Her; therefore, the address to Śrī Rādhā is Harā. Harā changes to Hare in the vocative case. "

Hare – "*kṛṣṇaṁ vanaṁ harati vanam āgamayatīti harā rādhā, tasyāḥ saṁbodhane he hare* – Śrī Rādhā steals Kṛṣṇa away to the forest. In other words Her attraction takes Kṛṣṇa to the forest groves of Vṛndāvana; thus, Śrī Rādhā is called Harā. She is addressed, '*He* Hare!' "

Rāma – "*ramayati tāṁ narma-nirīkṣaṇādineti rāmaḥ, tasya saṁbodhane he rāma* – Śrī Kṛṣṇa's playful smile, laughter, *darśana*, etc., involves Śrī Rādhikā in amorous pastimes and thus gives pleasure to Her. For this reason His name is Rāma. He is addressed, '*He* Rāma!' "

Hare – "*tāt-kālikaṁ dhairyāvalaṁbanādikaṁ kṛṣṇasya haratīti harā rādhā tasyāh saṁbodhane he hare* – Śrī Rādhā causes

Kṛṣṇa to instantly lose His patience and composure. Therefore, She is Harā and addressed, '*He* Hare!' "

Rāma – "*cumbana-stanākarṣaṇālinganādibhiḥ ramate iti rāmaḥ tasya saṁbodhane he rāma* – By means of intimate kisses, *stana-ākarṣaṇa*, embraces and so forth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs intimate pastimes with Rādhikā. He is addressed, '*He* Rāma!' "

Rāma – "*punas tāṁ puruṣocitāṁ kṛtvā ramayatīti rāmaḥ, tasya saṁbodhane he rāma* – Śrī Kṛṣṇa is He who enjoys amorous pastimes with His consort, Śrī Rādhikā, by making Her play the dominant role in love. He is thus called Rāma (the enjoyer), and is addressed '*He* Rāma!' "

Rāma – "*punas tatra ramate iti rāmaḥ, tasya saṁbodhane he rāma* – Because He repeatedly enjoys pleasure in that place, He is called Rāma and is addressed '*He* Rāma!' "

Hare – "*punaḥ rāsānte kṛṣṇasya mano hṛtvā gacchatīti harā rādhā, tasyāḥ saṁbodhane he hare* – As *rāsa-līlā* comes to a conclusion, She walks away and yet again steals Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mind. Rādhā is therefore called Harā. She is addressed '*He* Hare!' "

Hare – "*rādhāyā mano hṛtvā gacchatīti hariḥ kṛṣṇaḥ, tasya saṁbodhane he hare* – Similarly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, at the conclusion



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa

of *rāsa-līlā* also walks away, capturing Rādhikā's mind. Thus He is called Hari. Here, Kṛṣṇa is addressed, '*He* Hare!' "

Thus ends the commentary on the mahā-mantra
by Śrī Gopala Guru Gosvāmī

The commentary on the mahā-mantra by Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

ekadā kṛṣṇa-virahād dhyāyantī priya-saṅgamam
mano- vāṣpa-nirāsārthaṁ jalpatīdaṁ muhur muhuḥ

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare
he hare – sva-nāma-śravaṇa-mātreṇa sva-mādhuryeṇa ca mac-ceto harasi.
tatra hetuḥ: he kṛṣṇa iti. kṛṣ-śabdasya sarvārthaḥ ṇaś ca ānanda-svarūpa iti svārthe ṇaḥ. sac-cid-ānanda-svarūpaka iti svīyena sārva-dik-paramānandena sārvādhika-paramānandena vā pralobhya iti bhāvaḥ.
tataś ca he hare – vaṁśī-vādane mama dhairya-lajjā-gurubhayādikam api harasi.
tataś ca he kṛṣṇa – svāṅga-saurabheṇa māṁ sva-gṛhebhyo vṛndāvanaṁ pratyākarṣasi.
tataś ca he kṛṣṇa – vanaṁ praviṣṭāyā me kañcukīṁ sahasaivāgatya karṣasi.
tataś ca he kṛṣṇa – svāṅga-lāvaṇyena sarvādhikānandena ca māṁ pralobhya mat kucau karṣasi (*nakhair ākarṣasi*).
tataś ca he hare – sva-bāhu-nibaddhāṁ māṁ puṣpa-śayyāṁ prati harasi.
tataś ca he hare – tatra niveśitāyā me antarīyam api balād harasi.
tataś ca he hare – antarīya-vasana-haraṇa-miṣeṇātma-viraha-pīḍāṁ sarvam eva harasi.

tataś ca he rāma – svacchandaṁ mayi ramase.
tataś ca he hare – yad avaśiṣṭaṁ me kiñcid vāmyam āsīt tad api harasi.
tataś ca he rāma – māṁ ramayasi svasmin puruṣāyitām api karoṣi.
tataś ca he rāma – ramaṇīya-cūḍā-maṇe! tava navīna-vaktra-mādhuryam api niḥśaṅkaṁ tad-ātmānaṁ tava rāmaṇīyakaṁ mannayanābhyāṁ dvābhyām evā 'svādyate iti bhāvaḥ.
tataś ca he rāma – ramaṇaṁ ramaḥ, ramasya bhāvaḥ rāmaḥ; he rāma! tadā tvaṁ sākṣād rāmaṇādhidevabhvarūpo 'prākṛta-kandarpa eva bhavasi, athavā na kevalaṁ ramaṇa-rūpeṇāpi ramaṇa-kartu ramaṇa-prayojakaḥ kintu tad-bhāva-rūpā rati-mūrtir iva tvaṁ bhavasīti bhāvaḥ.
tataś ca he hare – mac-cetanā-mṛgīm api harasi, mām ānanda-mūrcchitāṁ karoṣīti bhāvaḥ.
yato he hare – siṁha-svarūpa! tad api tvaṁ rati-karmaṇi siṁha iva mahā-prāgalbhyaṁ prakaṭayasīti bhāvaḥ
evaṁ bhūtena tvayā preyasā viyuktā 'ham kṣaṇam api kalpa-koṭim iva yāpayituṁ kathaṁ prabhāvāmīti svayam eva vicāraya iti nāma ṣoḍaśakasyā 'bhiprāyaḥ. tataś ca nāmabhiś cumbakair iva kṛṣṇaḥ kṛṣṇayā sahasaivā 'kṛṣto milita-paramānanda eva. tasyāḥ sva-sakhīnāṁ tat-parivāra-vargasya tad-bhāva-sādhakānām arvācīnānām api śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇo mānasaṁ saṁpūrayataḥ.

Commentary
by Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

He Hare **–** *mac-cittaṁ hṛtvā bhava-bandhanān mocaya* – O Hare, please captivate my mind and release me from material existence.

He Kṛṣṇa – *mac-cittam ākarṣa* – O Kṛṣṇa, please attract my restless mind toward You.

He Hare – *sva-mādhuryeṇa mac-cittaṁ harā* – O Hare, captivate my mind with Your innate sweetness.

He Kṛṣṇa – *sva-bhakta-dvārā bhajana-jñāna-dānena mac-cittaṁ śodhaya* – O Kṛṣṇa, please make my mind pure with the knowledge of devotional service, as given by Your devotees, who understand the science of devotion.

He Kṛṣṇa – *nāma-rūpa-guṇa-līlādiṣu man-niṣṭhāṁ kuru* – O Kṛṣṇa, please give me firm faith in Your name, form, qualities and pastimes.

He Kṛṣṇa – *rucir bhavatu me* – O Kṛṣṇa, may I develop a taste for Your name, form, qualities and pastimes.

He Hare – *nija-sevā-yogyaṁ māṁ kuru* – O Hare, please make me qualified to serve You.

He Hare – *sva-sevām ādeśaya* – O Hare, please make me qualified and order me to serve You.

He Hare – *sva-preṣṭhena saha svābhīṣṭa-līlāṁ śrāvaya* – O Hare, please make me hear of Your sweet pastimes with Your dear most beloved (Kṛṣṇa).

He Rāma – *preṣṭhayā saha svābhīṣṭa-līlāṁ māṁ śrāvaya* – O Rāma, Rādhikā-ramaṇa, make me hear of Your most cherished amorous pastimes that You perform with Your beloved Śrī Rādhikā.

He Hare – *sva-preṣṭhena saha svābhīṣṭa-līlāṁ māṁ darśaya* – O Hare, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, please give me *darśana* of Your dearest pastimes with Your beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

He Rāma – *preṣṭhayā saha svābhīṣṭa-līlāṁ māṁ darśaya* – O Rāma, Rādhikā-ramaṇa, please reveal to me a vision of Your cherished pastimes with Your beloved.

He Rāma – *nāma-rūpa-guṇa-līlā-smaraṇādiṣu māṁ yojaya* – O Rāma, please engage me in remembering Your name, form, qualities and pastimes.

He Rāma – *tatra māṁ nija-sevā-yogyaṁ kuru* – O Rāma, please make me qualified to serve You in those pastimes.

He Hare – *māṁ svāṅgī-kṛtya ramasva* – O Hare, please accept me and include me within Your pastimes. In other words make me blissful.

He Hare – *mayā saha ramasva* – O Hare, please include me in Your pastimes. Perform Your transcendental sports with me.

Thus ends the commentary on the mahā-mantra taken from
Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta and other scriptures by
Śrī Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Commentary on Śrī Pada-kalpataru

nara harināma antare achu bhāvaha
habe bhava-sāgare pāra
dhara re śravaṇe nara harināma sādare
cintāmaṇi uha sāra

O brother, just by slightly experiencing this holy name in your heart, you can cross the ocean of material existence. Therefore, with great respect, take this *harināma* through your aural senses, for it is the very essence of a wish-fulfilling spiritual gem (*cintāmaṇi*).

yadi kṛta-pāpi ādare kabhu mantraka-
rāja śravaṇe kare pāna
śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya bale haya tachu durgama
pāpa tāpa saha trāṇa

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that if a sinful person even once respectfully accepts this emperor of all *mantras* (the *mahā-mantra*) through his aural senses, the gravest of his sins will be vanquished along with all

the misery within the blazing fire of this material world (*adhyātmika*, *adhibhautika* and *adhidaivika*).

karaha gaura-guru-vaiṣṇava-āśraya
laha nara harināma-hāra
saṁsāre nāma lai sukṛti haiyā tare
āpāmara durācāra

O brother, accepting the shelter of Śrī Gaurāṅga, *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, take this garland of *śrī harināma*. Even the most ordinary and immoral people will be able to cross beyond this material world by accumulating spiritual merit (*sukṛti*) on the strength of these names.

ithe kṛta-viṣaya-tṛṣṇa pahuñ-nāma-hārā
yo dhāraṇe śrama-bhāra
ku-tṛṣna jagadānanda kṛta-kalmaṣa
kumati rahala kārāgāra

As a result of giving up the holy name, only this wretched Jagadānanda, due to deep attachment to material sense objects and absorption in sinful activities, has remained in this world and busies himself with other practices. I am like a labourer carrying an unnecessary burden, and thus I continue to lie in the penitentiary of this material world.

Śrī Pada-kalpataru, *Gaura-pada-taraṅgiṇī taraṅga* 1, *Ucchvāsa* 2, *pada* 59

	1 ⇓				3 ⇓			
nara	**ha**	rināma anta	**re**	acchu bhāvaha	**ha**	be bhava sāga	**re**	pāra
dhara	**re**	śravaṇe nara	**ha**	rināma sāda	**re**	cintāmaṇi u	**ha**	sāra
yadi	**kṛ**	ta-pāpi āda	**re**	kabhu mantraka	**rā**	ja śravaṇe ka	**re**	pāna
śrī kṛ-	**ṣṇa**	caitanya bale	**ha**	ya tacchu durga	**ma**	pāpa tāpa sa	**ha**	trāṇa
kara-	**ha**	gaura-guru-vai	**ṣṇa**	va āśraya la	**ha**	nara harinā	**ma**	hāra
saṁsā-	**re**	nāma lai su	**kṛ**	ti haiyā ta	**re**	āpāmara du	**rā**	cāra
ithe	**kṛ**	ta-viṣaya-tṛ	**ṣṇa**	pahuñ-nāma-hā	**rā**	yo dhāraṇe śra	**ma**	bhāra
ku-tṛ-	**ṣṇa**	jagadānanda	**kṛ**	ta-kalmaṣa ku	**ma**	ti rahala kā	**rā**	gāra
			⇑ 2				⇑ 4	

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

This illustration reveals the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* concealed within the *Pada-kalpataru* song.



The Glories of Śrī Harināma

One can find an abundance of glorification of Śrī Bhagavān's name in the scriptures. A portion of those glories will be mentioned here.

The intrinsic form of the holy name

~ Nāma-svarūpa ~

nāma cintāmaniḥ kṛṣṇaś
caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ
pūrnaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto
'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.108)

The holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa awards all benedictions, just like the *cintāmaṇi* stone. It is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the embodiment of all transcendental mellows (*caitanya-rasa-vigraha*). Since Kṛṣṇa's name and Kṛṣṇa Himself are non-different, the holy name is complete, beyond

the influence of the material energy (*māyā*) and eternally liberated.

In Kali-yuga the holy name bestows all perfection

kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann
asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ
kīrttanād eva kṛṣṇasya
mukta-saṅgaḥ paraṁ vrajet

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (12.3.51)

My dear King, although Kali-yuga is an ocean of faults, there is still one good quality about this age: Simply by chanting the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*, one can become free from material bondage and promoted to the transcendental kingdom.[6]

kṛte yad-dhyāyato viṣṇuṁ
tretāyāṁ yajato makhaiḥ
dvāpare paricaryāyāṁ
kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (12.3.52)

The result that is attained in Satya-yuga by performing (*dhyāna*) meditation on Śrī Bhagavān, in Tretā-yuga by performing opulent fire sacrifices (*yajña*) and in

6 Translation by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda
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Dvāpara-yuga by performing formal worship (*arcana*), is easily available in the age of Kali solely by performing the chanting of the name of Śrī Bhagavān (*harināma-kīrtana*).

dhyāyan kṛte yajan yajñais-tretāyāṁ dvāpare 'rcayan
yadāpnoti tadāpnoti kalau saṅkīrtya keśavam

Viṣṇu Purāṇa (6.2.17)
Padma Purāṇa, Uttara-khaṇḍa (42.25)

The same benefit that can be obtained in Satya-yuga through meditation (*dhyāna*), in Tretā-yuga through performance of fire sacrifices (*yajña)* and in Dvāpara-yuga through methodical worship (*arcana*), can be obtained in Kali-yuga only through *harināma-kīrtana*.

kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra
nāma haite haya sarva-jagat-nistāra

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 17.22)

In Kali-yuga it is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself who has descended in the form of His name. Through this name the entire world is delivered.

nāma vinā kali-kāle nāhi āra dharma
sarva-mantra-sāra nāma ei śāstra-marma

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Ādi-līlā* 7.74)

In the age of Kali there is no other authorized religious practice than to chant the holy name. It is the essence

of all Vedic *mantras*. This is the established conclusion of the teachings of all the scriptures.

The glories of the holy name as described by the previous spiritual masters

aṁhaḥ saṁharate 'khilaṁ sakṛd
udayād eva sakala-lokasya
taraṇir iva timira-jaladhiṁ
jayati jagan-maṅgalaṁ harer nāma

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī
Padyāvalī (6)

All victory to the holy name, which is auspicious for the entire world! Just as the rising sun dissipates all darkness, similarly, if the holy name arises just once, it can destroy all of a person's sins.

ākṛṣṭiḥ kṛta-cetasāṁ sumanasām uccāṭanaṁ cāṁhasām
ā-caṇḍālam amūka-loka-sulabho vaśyaś ca mukti-śriyaḥ
no dīkṣāṁ na ca sat-kriyāṁ na ca puraścaryāṁ manāg īkṣate
mantro 'yaṁ rāsanā-spṛg eva phalati śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmātmakaḥ

Padyāvalī (18)

The holy name attracts the minds of even those who are beyond the three modes of material nature. It is easily accessible to those with the power of eloquence, as well as to *cāṇḍālas* (the lowest among human beings,

dog-eaters, etc.). It even conquers the opulence of liberation (*mukti*). Such is the *mahā-mantra*, the very form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's names. From the very moment the holy name contacts the tongue it awards results, without slightly considering whether or not a person has taken initiation (*dīkṣā*), performed pious activities or performed preparatory rituals.

The glories of chanting the holy name exceed the glories of realizing the impersonal brahma

yad-brahma-sākṣāt-kṛti-niṣṭhayāpi
vināśam āyāti vinā na bhogaiḥ
apaiti nāma-sphuraṇena tat te
prārabdha-karmeti virauti vedaḥ

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī
Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭakam (4)

O Nāma Prabhu, the fructified sinful reactions (*prārabdha-karma*), which one has to undergo, even after attaining realization through uninterrupted resolute meditation on the impersonal *brahma*, in a completely detached state, are at once destroyed just by your vibration. In other words, they are destroyed the very moment You appear on the tongue of the devotee. In a loud voice, the Vedas declare this repeatedly.

The superiority of chanting the holy name

agha-cchit-smaraṇaṁ viṣṇor
vahv-āyāsena sādhyate
oṣṭha-spandana-mātreṇa
kīrttanas tu tato varam

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (11.236)
Vaiṣṇava-cintāmaṇi-vākya

Although remembrance of Śrī Viṣṇu destroys all sins, full remembrance of Him can only be achieved after endeavouring with great difficulty. Chanting His names, however, is superior even to remembering Him. (This is because by merely vibrating the name with *nāmābhāsa* – one becomes liberated from bondage to the cycle of birth and death.)

The superiority of chanting the holy name over meditation and temple worship

jayati jayati nāmānanda-rūpaṁ murārer
viramita-nija-dharma-dhyāna-pūjādi-yatnam
katham api sakṛd āttaṁ mukti-daṁ prāṇināṁ yat
paramamamṛtam ekaṁ jīvanaṁ bhūṣaṇaṁ me

Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛtam (1.1.9)

All victory, all victory to the name of Murāri, the embodiment of divine bliss! Through the chanting of this name, one's religious duties, meditation, worship

and other endeavours are completed. However the holy name is uttered (even by one in the stage of *nāmābhāsa*), it awards liberation to the living entities [who hear it]. It is therefore the supreme nectar, my very life and my adornment.

yena janma-śataiḥ pūrvaṁ
vāsudevaḥ samarcitaḥ
tan-mukhe hari-nāmāni
sadā tiṣṭhanti bhārata

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (11.237)

O best of the dynasty of Bharata, the holy name of Śrī Hari is eternally present only on the lips of one who has properly worshipped Vāsudeva for hundreds of births.

Chanting the holy name is not governed by rules regarding time, place or circumstance

na deśa-niyamo rājan na kāla-niyamas tathā
vidyate nātra sandeho viṣṇor nāmānukīrttane
kālo 'sti dāne yajñe ca snāne kālo 'sti sajjape
viṣṇuḥ sankīrttane kālo nāsty atra pṛthivī-tale

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (11.206)
Saṁkhyādhṛta Vaiṣṇava-cintāmaṇi-vākya

O King, it is stated unequivocally that time and place are not considered in the performance of the chanting of

the names of Śrī Viṣṇu. Rules regarding time (*kāla*) and regulations (*niyama*) are applicable in regard to giving in charity (*dāna*), performing fire sacrifice (*yajña*) and chanting other *mantras*. On this earth planet, however, such considerations do not apply to the performance of the congregational chanting of Śrī Viṣṇu's names (*saṅkīrtana*).

na deśa-niyamas tasmin na kāla-niyamas tathā
nocchiṣṭādau niṣedho 'sti śrī-harer nāmni lubdhaka

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (11.202)
quoted from *Viṣṇu-dharmottara-vākya*

O Hunter, time and place are not a consideration in regard to chanting the holy name of Śrī Hari. Nor is there any [scriptural] prohibition in regard to chanting in an unclean state due to having eaten, or being in of any kind of unclean condition.[7]

madhura-madhuram etan maṅgalaṁ maṅgalānāṁ
sakala-nigama-vallī-sat-phalaṁ cit-svarūpam
sakṛd api parigītaṁ śraddhayā helayā vā
bhṛguvara nara-mātraṁ tārayet kṛṣṇa-nāma

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (11.234)
quoted from *Skanda Purāṇa*

7 Scripture ordains that to perform various devotional activities, one must bathe and don clean cloth, or cloth that one has not worn while eating, etc. This regulation does not apply to the chanting of the holy name.

The holy name is the most auspicious of all that is auspicious, and the sweetest of all that is sweet. It is the fully ripened transcendental fruit of all the creepers of the Śrutis [literally, "that which is heard", the Vedas]. O best of the Bhṛgu dynasty, if a person even once chants the name of Kṛṣṇa without offence – be it with faith or indifference – that chanting will deliver him from the bondage of material existence.

Chanting the holy name is the process (sādhana) and the goal (sādhya) for everyone

etan nirvidyamānānām
icchatām akuto-bhayam
yoginām nṛpa nirṇītaṁ
harer nāmānukīrttanam

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (2.1.11)

O King, the previous spiritual masters have declared the following to be the immovable principle (*siddhānta*): Repeated chanting and remembering of the name of Śrī Hari is the supreme practice and goal for those who are indifferent to sense pleasure, for the exclusively dedicated devotees, for those who desire liberation, promotion to heaven, etc., and for the self-satisfied *yogīs*.



Saccidānanda Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Śrī Harināma

by Saccidānanda Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

The ocean of material existence is very difficult to cross. Without the mercy of Parameśvara, the Supreme Controller, it is not only difficult but impossible. Even though the living entities are superior to matter, they are by nature weak and dependent. Bhagavān is their sole protector, guardian and saviour. The living entity (*jīva*) is an atomic conscious being (*aṇu-caitanya*), and therefore, he is dependent on and the servant of the Supreme Conscious Entity (Bhagavān).

That Supreme Conscious Entity is the shelter for all living entities. This world of matter is created by the deluding material potency (*māyā*), and the position of the living entity is like that of an offender in prison. The living entity wanders throughout the world created by the material potency as a result of his opposition to the Supreme Lord (Bhagavān). Those living entities who are opposed to Bhagavān are chained by the deluding potency and thus called *baddha-jīvas*, or conditioned souls, whereas those living

entities who are inclined toward Bhagavān are free from the deluding energy and are called *mukta-jīvas*, or liberated souls. In this way, according to their condition, the unlimited living entities can be divided into *baddha-jīvas* and *mukta-jīvas*.

By devotional practice, the conditioned soul attains the mercy of Bhagavān and thus becomes capable of breaking free from the powerful chains of *māyā*. After lengthy contemplation, our extremely glorious saints have established three types of spiritual practice (*sādhana*): *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*.

Karma

Varṇāśrama-dharma[8], austerities (*tapasyā*), fire sacrifice (*yajña*), giving in charity (*dāna*), executing vows (*vrata*) and *yoga* are mentioned in scriptures as limbs of prescribed duties, or pious fruitive action (*karma*), and their results are clearly described.

By deeply understanding the distinct nature of these results, the primary effects of *karma*, or pious action performed to attain the fruit of that action, are revealed. The results are (1) enjoyment on the earthly planets, (2) enjoyment in the heavenly planets, (3) relief from disease and (4) the opportunity to perform good *karma*.

8 The Vedic social system, which arranges society into four occupational divisions (*varṇas*), based on a person's natural qualities, and also into four stages of spiritual development (*āśramas*).

If we separate the fourth effect – the opportunity to perform higher *karma* – from the other three, it seems that the results of enjoying the earthly planets and the heavenly planets and curing disease, which the living entity acquires by performing pious activity, are all illusory as well as perishable. Such results will be destroyed in the Supreme Lord's wheel of time. It is not possible to become free from the bondage of the deluding potency (*māyā*) by attaining these results. On the contrary, they will increase the desire to execute more *karma*, which will lead to further bondage to *māyā*. Results such as attaining the opportunity to perform higher pious action become meaningless if not performed in the real sense.

In this regard, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.8) states:

dharmaḥ svanuṣṭhitaḥ puṁsāṁ
viṣvaksena-kathāsu yaḥ
notpādayed yadi ratiṁ
śrama eva hi kevalam

> If, even after executing *varṇāśrama-dharma* precisely, a human being does not develop a taste in his heart for hearing and chanting the glories of Śrī Bhagavān and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, his endeavour has been useless labour.

In *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the divisions of pious duties, both wordly and bodily, are based on the human beings' inherent

natures. Its ultimate purpose facilitates a person's continued journey within this material world (*saṁsāra*), and within this body, in the easiest possible way, so that he gets ample time to hear *hari-kathā*. If a human being practises *varṇāśrama-dharma* perfectly but has no taste for *hari-kathā*, then all of his endeavours amount to useless labour only. The ocean of material existence cannot be crossed by performing pious action. I have explained this briefly.

Jñāna

Empiric knowledge, or *jñāna*, is also considered a means by which one can achieve a higher goal. The result of *jñāna* is the purification of the soul (*ātma-śuddhi*). The soul (*ātmā*) is beyond matter, but the living entity, forgetting this reality, takes shelter of matter. In this way, he becomes lost on the path of *karma*, or pious action.

By discussing empiric knowledge, a person can understand that he is not composed of matter but is transcendental. The intrinsic nature of this type of knowledge is merely the renunciation of pious action and its fruits. It is thus called *naiṣkarmya* (absence of pious action and its reaction).

In this stage, the living entity has a little knowledge about transcendental entities (*cit-vastu*) but is yet to begin relishing transcendental bliss, which is that transcendental entity's eternal function. The *jīvas* who have attained this stage are

called *ātmarāma* (one who finds pleasure solely in the self). But when the transcendental activity of relishing spiritual bliss begins, the stage of *naiṣkarmya*, absence of pious action and its reaction, comes to an end. For this reason Devarṣi Nārada states in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.12):

naiṣkarmyam apy acyuta-bhāva-varjitaṁ
na śobhate jñānam alaṁ nirañjanam

Even *jñāna* (knowledge) that is devoid of material affinity in the form of freedom from reaction, but that is not resplendent with pure devotion (*bhakti*), is completely fit to be neglected.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.7.10) also mentions:

ātmārāmāś ca munayo
nirgranthā apy urukrame
kurvanty ahaitukīṁ bhaktim
ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ

There is such an extraordinary quality in Hari, the Supreme Conscious Entity, that He even attracts all those who rejoice in the self (*ātmarāmas*), who are free from material bondage, and engages them in *bhakti*, or devotion, to Him.

Therefore, prescribed duties (*karma*) and empiric knowledge (*jñāna*) can only be considered limbs of *sādhana* when the

results of pious action (bringing the privilege to perform higher pious action) and *jñāna* (renouncing its state of passivity due to taking pleasure only in the self) are employed in the execution of *bhakti*.

In and of themselves, empiric knowledge and prescribed duties are not accepted as limbs of *sādhana*. They are only accepted as such when they lead us to *bhakti*. It is then that they have some significance. Therefore, only *bhakti* is called *sādhana*. Because prescribed duties and empiric knowledge are dependent on *bhakti*, in some places they are accepted as *sādhana*. But *bhakti*, by its very nature, is the intrinsic nature of *sādhana*.

Bhakti

The verdict of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.14.20) is very clear on this topic:

na sādhayati māṁ yogo
na sāṅkhyaṁ dharma uddhava
na svādhyāyas tapas tyāgo
yathā bhaktir mamorjitā

> O Uddhava, performing duties as prescribed in scripture (*karma-yoga*), analytical philosophy (*sāṅkhya-yoga*) or executing *varṇāśrama-dharma* cannot please Me; nor can study of the Vedas, austerity or renunciation. Only the performance of ardent *bhakti* is pleasing to Me.

Performing *bhakti* is the only way to please Bhagavān; there is no other means. There are nine kinds of *sādhana-bhakti*: hearing about Him (*śravaṇa*), chanting His name and glories (*kīrtana*), remembering Him (*smaraṇa*), worshipping Him (*arcana*), praying to Him (*vandana*), offering Him obeisances (*pāda-sevanam*), serving Him (*dāsya*), making friendship with Him (*sakhya*) and fully surrendering one's very self to Him (*ātma-nivedana*).

Hearing, chanting and remembering are the primary limbs of devotional practice (*sādhana*). Śrī Bhagavān's name, form, qualities and pastimes should be the object of these practices. Of these four, *śrī nāma*, chanting the holy name, is the original seed. Thus, according to scripture, *harināma* is the root of all worship:

> *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam*
> *kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*
>
> *Śrī-Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa* (3.8.126)

> The name of Hari, the name of Hari, the name of Hari is the only way. In this age of Kali, there is no other way, there is no other way, there is absolutely no other way to achieve the ultimate destination.

The word *kalau* is to be understood as follows. Although there is never a time when *śrī harināma* is not the sole means

for deliverance, in the age of Kali, the various other *mantras* and practices have become weak. For this reason, in Kali-yuga, it is especially appropriate to take shelter of this all-powerful *harināma*.

In relation to the holy name, *Śrī Padma Purāṇa* states:

> *nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ*
> *pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ*

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his commentary on the above verse:

> *ekam eva sac-cid-ānanda–rasādi-rūpaṁ*
> *tattvaṁ dvidhāvirbhūtam ity arthaḥ*
>
> *Śrī-kṛṣṇa-tattva* is the non-dual form of eternity, knowledge and bliss (*advaya-sac-cid-ānanda-svarūpa*). He has appeared in two forms, as *nāmī*, the possessor of the name (the very form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and as *nāma*, His name.

The essence of all spiritual truths (*tattva*) is that Kṛṣṇa is the possessor of all potencies (*sarva-śaktimān*). The splendour of He who possesses all potencies is the splendour of His potency. It is *śakti* that reveals the transcendental form of the Supreme Person, her basis. By her power to exhibit, Śrī

Kṛṣṇa's form is revealed, and by her power to invoke, the holy name manifests [on the tongue]. Therefore, this holy name awards the supreme goal of life and all transcendental good fortune (*cintāmaṇi-svarūpa*). It is also the very form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-svarūpa*) and the personification of transcendental mellows (*caitanya-rasa-vigrahah-svarūpa*).

Nāma is eternally complete in itself. In other words, in chanting the holy name, it is not required to combine inflected forms to form *mantras*, like *kṛṣṇāya-nārāyaṇāya*. As soon as the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is uttered, *kṛṣṇa-rasa* rises spontaneously in the consciousness. The holy name is eternally pure and transcendental; it is not lifeless like material syllables. Only *nāma* is *caitanya-rasa*, composed of transcendental humours, and ever liberated. The material tongue is not capable of producing the holy name. Only a person who has tasted the *rasa* of the holy name can understand this explanation. Those who imagine that the holy name is lifeless, or of material origin, cannot relish transcendental mellows, nor can they be satisfied with this explanation.

Someone may say that the holy name, which we chant continuously, is dependent on material syllables. How, then, can it be said that the holy name is eternally liberated and not a material object? Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī responds to this adverse opinion as follows:

ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.234)

This means that the material senses can only perceive a material object. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is transcendental; therefore, it can never be perceived by the material senses. That *nāma* which initially manifests on the tongue is the result of a *sphūrti* – a pulsating of the transcendental bliss of the soul in the present material senses. But when the soul's transcendental tongue utters Kṛṣṇa's name, the Supreme Absolute Truth personally appears on the material tongue and begins to dance. As transcendental humours pervade the senses of the devotee, he laughs out of bliss (*ānanda*), weeps and laments out of affection (*sneha*) and dances out of love (*prīti*). In this way *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-rasa* pervades the tongue. Kṛṣṇa's name is not produced by a material tongue.

The holy name that is chanted at the time of *sādhana* is but a shadow of the name, or *nāmābhāsa*, chanting that is covered by clouds of ignorance and by *anarthas*, desires unfavourable to the development of *bhakti*. It is not the holy name proper. It has been repeatedly seen that continued practice of *nāmābhāsa* takes one through different stages of advancement and brings one to the stage of transcendental taste for the transcendental names. The lives of Vālmīki and Ajāmila are shining examples of this.

The living entity has no taste for the holy name because of his offences. For those who chant the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa without offence, the transcendental name of Śrī Hari, the fully conscious reservoir of all *rasa*, manifests Himself within their hearts. With the rising of the holy name, the heart blossoms with joy, streams of tears flow from one's eyes and symptoms of transcendental ecstasy (*sāttvika-vikāra*) become manifest in the body. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.3.24) thus states:

tad aśma-sāraṁ hṛdayaṁ vatedaṁ
yad-gṛhyamāṇair hari-nāma-dheyaiḥ
na vikriyetātha yadā vikāro
netre jalaṁ gātra-ruheṣu harṣaḥ

When the living entities chant the holy name, they indeed experience a complete transformation of heart, tears flow from their eyes, their bodily hairs stand erect, and so forth. When, despite chanting Kṛṣṇa's name, a person does not experience any of these symptoms, it is to be understood that his heart has become very hard due to offences.

The primary duty of a practitioner of *bhakti* is to chant the holy name of Śrī Hari without offence. It is therefore necessary to know the many types of offences, as one can then stop oneself from committing them.

The ten offences to the holy name mentioned in scripture

(1) To blaspheme devotees and saintly persons.
(2) To consider demigods like Lord Śiva to be equal to Bhagavān or independent of Him.
(3) To disobey *śrī guru*, who reveals the truth about the holy name.
(4) To criticize the Vedic literature that describes the glories of the holy name.
(5) To consider the glories of the holy name to be an exaggeration or false glorification.
(6) To consider the meanings of the holy name as revealed in scripture to be imaginary; in other words, to consider the names Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, etc., to be a product of the imagination.
(7) To commit sinful activities on the strength of chanting the holy name.
(8) To equate chanting of the holy name with materially auspicious activities recommended in the portion of the Vedas that deals with selfishly motivated fruitive action (*karma-kānda*).
(9) To instruct faithless persons on the glories of the holy name.
(10) To not have faith in the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, despite hearing its glories.

(1) To blaspheme devotees and saintly persons

If a person disbelieves in the saintly devotees and blasphemes the perfected souls whose characters are spotless, it is an offence to the holy name. Therefore, one who accepts the holy name must first reject with his whole heart the tendency to disrespect or disregard any Vaiṣṇava. If a doubt arises about the activity of a Vaiṣṇava, one should try to inquire about the cause of that behaviour and avoid criticizing him. Our primary duty is to have faith (*śraddhā*) in the *sādhus*.

(2) To consider demigods like Lord Śiva to be equal to Bhagavān or independent of Him

To consider demigods like Lord Śiva to be independent of Bhagavān is an offence to the holy name, or a *nāma-aparādha*. *Bhagavat-tattva* is one without a second. Demigods like Lord Śiva are not independent of Śrī Bhagavān's authority, nor are they separate from Him. If a person honours demigods like Śiva as qualitative incarnations of the material modes of nature (*guṇa-avatāras*) or as devotees of Bhagavān, he will not form the misconception that they are independent of Him. Those who consider Mahādeva (Śiva) an independent and separate demigod, worshipping him alongside Viṣṇu, do not actually honour the true glory of Mahādeva, who is the greatest among Vaiṣṇavas. Such persons therefore

become offensive to both Viṣṇu and Śiva. Those who chant the holy name should reject this kind of misconception.

(3) To disobey śrī guru, who reveals the truth about the holy name

To disobey *śrī gurudeva* is *nāma-aparādha*, an offence to the holy name. He who gives the highest teachings on the truth about the name (*nāma-tattva*) should be accepted as a spiritual master, or *ācārya*, and as someone most dear to Bhagavān. One can attain firm faith in the holy name by cultivating staunch devotion for *śrī gurudeva*.

(4) To criticize the Vedic literature that describes the glories of the holy name

The bona fide scriptures should never be blasphemed. Revealed scriptures like the Vedas describe pure loving devotion unto the Supreme Lord (*bhāgavata-dharma*); in other words, the glories of the holy name (*śrī-nāma*). Therefore, to blaspheme these scriptures is an offence to the holy name, the glories of which are described throughout the Vedas:

vede rāmāyane caiva
purāṇe bhārate tathā
ādāv ante ca madhye ca
hariḥ sarvatra gīyate

Mahābhārata (*Svargārohaṇa-parva* 6.93)

> In Vedic literature, including the Rāmāyaṇa, Purāṇas and Mahābhārata, from the very beginning (*ādau*) to the end (*ante ca*), as well as within the middle (*madhye ca*), only Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is explained.[9]

How can a person develop love for the holy name if he blasphemes bona fide scriptures? Some people consider the scriptures' descriptions of the importance of the holy name to be simply words of praise. It is an offense to the holy name to chant the name with such an attitude, and those who do so will never achieve any tangible result. Such persons conclude that scriptures falsely praise the glories of the holy name, just as they falsely praise selfishly motivated fruitive action (*karma-kāṇḍa*) so that people will develop a taste to perform it. Those who think like this are unfortunate. On the other hand, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.1.11) describes the faith of fortunate persons:

etan nirvidyamānānām
icchatām akuto-bhayam
yoginām nṛpa nirṇītaṁ
harer nāmānukīrttanam

9 Translation by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda
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This means that the sole duty of a *yogī* who is detached from the material world and who wishes to become free from all fear is to chant the holy name. Persons who have such faith can achieve the real fruit of chanting.

(5) To consider the glories of the holy name to be an exaggeration or false glorification

Some people do not understand the difference between *nāmābhāsa* (a shadow of the name) and *nāma* (the pure name). They believe that *nāma* is only a combination of syllables that will definitely grant results whether one has faith or not. They use the life and character of Ajāmila as an example, quoting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.2.14):

sāṅketyaṁ pārihāsyaṁ vā
stobhaṁ helanam eva vā
vaikuṇṭha-nāma-grahaṇam
aśeṣāgha-haraṁ viduḥ

> One who chants the holy name is immediately freed from the reactions to unlimited sins, even if he chants indirectly (to indicate something else), jokingly, for musical entertainment or neglectfully. This is the conclusion of all scholars learned in the scriptures.[10]

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(6) To consider the meanings of the holy name as revealed in scripture to be imaginary; in other words, to consider the names Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, etc., to be a product of the imagination

Previously *harināma* has been described as a conscious entity full of *rasa* (*caitanya-rasa-vigraha*), which cannot be perceived by the material senses. This proves that it is not possible to achieve the results of chanting when one commits offences to the holy name. He who chants without faith does not achieve the result of chanting; rather, after some time, he may obtain some faith in *nāma*. Faithless persons who believe that the name is a limb of *karma-kāṇḍa* (selfishly motivated fruitive action) or who propagate the holy name to be only material syllables are actually conditioned souls and offenders to the name. Vaiṣṇavas diligently endeavour to avoid this offence.

(7) To commit sinful activities on the strength of chanting the holy name

Some people believe that by taking shelter of the holy name, they have attained an easy remedy for the results of all their sins. With this idea they think that they can steal, perform acts of fraud and act illicitly, and then chant the holy name to eradicate all their misdeeds. A person who believes this is certainly an offender to the holy name. One who has just

once tasted the transcendental mellows of the holy name will never again become attached to temporary material activities.

(8) To equate chanting of the holy name with materially auspicious activities recommended in the portion of the Vedas that deals with selfishly motivated fruitive action (karma-kāṇḍa)

Some believe in pious activities (*karma*), such as performing sacrifices, giving in charity, behaving in accordance with religious principles and visiting holy places. They consider chanting the holy name, also, to be a pious activity, and therefore, they are *nāma-aparādhīs*. *Nāma* is always transcendental, whereas all pious action is material. This means that by nature, pious activities are different from *nāma*. Anyone who considers the holy name to be equivalent with pious action becomes indifferent to *nāma* and cannot relish its mellows (*nāma-rasa*). Just as there is a difference between diamonds and glass, similarly, there is a vast difference in nature between chanting the holy name and performing pious action.

(9) To instruct faithless persons on the glories of the holy name

One who instructs faithless persons on the holy name or gives them a *mantra* is also an offender to the name. It is pointless to cast pearls before swine. To do so is an insult

to the pearls, an act of disrespect. Similarly, it is extremely improper to instruct a faithless person on the holy name. It is wise to first endeavour to develop his faith, and after that instruct him on the holy name. Those who, with pride, assume the role of *guru* and give instructions on the holy name to faithless persons will definitely fall down, because they are committing *nāma-aparādha*, an offence to the holy name.

(10) To not have faith in the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, despite hearing its glories

If a person does not have exclusive faith in *harināma*, even after hearing its extensive glories, and if he is still attached to or dependent on practices such as *karma*, *jñāna* or *yoga*, then, also, he is an offender to the holy name.

In this way, the holy name will not arise unless we avoid *nāma-aparādha*.

Upon seeing the miseries of the living entity, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the saviour of those in Kali-yuga, instructs us with a compassionate heart:

tṛṇād api sunīcena
taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ

Śikṣāṣṭaka (3)

> By thinking oneself to be even more insignificant than straw in the street, being more tolerant than a tree, not accepting honour but giving honour to everyone, a living entity becomes eligible to chant the holy name.

The primary meaning of this verse is that one is to chant the holy name with a pure attitude. One who considers himself more lowly and fallen than anyone else never criticizes saintly persons or disregards demigods like Lord Śiva, considering them to be independent of Lord Viṣṇu. He never disregards *guru*, blasphemes the bona fide scriptures or doubts the glories of *harināma*. He never combines false speculation with dry arguments in order to equate *nirguṇa-brahma* with the name of Hari, nor does he commit offences on the strength of the holy name. He does not accept pious activities to be on an equal level with *harināma*, he never gives *harināma* to faithless persons, and he does not have a scent of a lack of faith in *nāma*. He constantly endeavours to be aloof from the ten types of offences to the holy name. He never follows those who either ridicule or are inimical to *nāma*. Even though he works for the entire world, he does not possess the slightest false ego of being the enjoyer or the doer. Thinking himself to be a servant of the world, he serves the whole world.

When such a qualified person chants *harināma*, the spiritual world, which is situated within the core of his

heart, radiates its transcendental light and thus keeps the darkness of *māyā*, the deluding material energy, far away. Therefore, O great souls, constantly perform *kīrtana* of the holy name without offence. There is no shelter for the *jīva*s other than *harināma*.

The endeavour to save oneself from drowning in this ocean of material existence by taking shelter of empiric knowledge (*jñāna*) and performing prescribed duties with the desire to attain the fruit (*karma*), is as futile as taking shelter of a piece of straw to cross a vast ocean. Therefore, accept the shelter of the great ship of the *mahā-mantra* and cross this ocean of material existence.

Glossary

A

Adhibhautika – Sufferings caused by other living beings.

Adhidaivika – Miseries caused by the demigods, such as disturbances in the weather.

Adhyātmika – Miseries caused by the mind and body.

Avatāra – Literally, "one who descends"; a partially or fully empowered incarnation of Śrī Bhagavān as described in the Vedic scriptures. An *avatāra* descends from the spiritual world to the material universe with a particular mission.

B

Bhagavān – The Supreme Personality of Godhead; "The word *bhagavat* is used to describe the Supreme Spirit Whole, He who possesses all opulence, who is completely pure and who is the cause of all causes" (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.5.72–4).

Bhajana – (1) The verbal root *bhaj* is used specifically in the sense of *sevā*, or service (2) Spiritual practice, especially hearing, chanting, remembering and meditating on the holy name, form, qualities and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Bhakta – One devoted to serving the Supreme Lord.

Bhakti – (1) Derived from the root *bhaj* (to serve) (2) The performance of activities meant exclusively for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which are done in a favourable spirit, which are saturated with love, which are devoid of other

desires and which are not covered by fruitive action or speculative knowledge is called *bhakti* (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.1.12).

Brahmā – The first created being in the universe. Directed by Śrī Viṣṇu, he creates all life forms in the universe and rules the mode of passion.

Brāhmaṇa – (1) One who realizes *brahma*, Supreme Spirit, is to be known as a *brāhmaṇa* (2) One of the four *varṇas*, or social divisions in the *varṇāśrama* system; a priest or teacher.

Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava sampradāya – There are four bona fide disciplic successions who bring to this world the actual message of Godhead: Brahmā, Rudra, Sanaka and Śrī. In Kali-yuga, Śrī Madhvācārya is the principle representative of the disciplic lineage headed by Lord Brahmā. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, headed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, are in this *sampradāya*.

C

Caitanya Mahāprabhu – The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the mood of a devotee. He appeared over five hundred years ago in Navadvīpa, West Bengal to spread love for the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa through the chanting of the holy name. He is also known as Śrī Caitanya, Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Gaura, Gauracandra, Gaurahari, Gaura-kiśora, Gaurāṅga, Gaurasundara, Gaura, Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Nimāi Paṇḍita, Śacīnandana and Viśvambhara.

D

Darśana – Seeing, meeting, visiting or beholding (a deity, a sacred place or an exalted Vaiṣṇava).

Dharma – From the verbal root *dhṛ* – to sustain; thus, *dharma* – that which sustains; (1) The natural, characteristic function of a thing

(e.g., the quality of fire to give off heat and light) (2) The natural and eternal function of the soul to love Śrī Kṛṣṇa (3) Religion in general (4) The socio-religious duties prescribed in scripture, designed to elevate one to the platform of *bhakti*.

Dīkṣā – Initiation from a spiritual master, in which the spiritual master imparts divine knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) to the disciple and eradicates all sins is known as *dīkṣā*.

Dvāpara-yuga – The third of the four ages described in the Vedas; the age preceding Kali-yuga. In Dvāpara-yuga people attained perfection by performing excellent worship of the Deity of the Lord.

G

Guru-paramparā – Perfected personalities within a disciplic succession, who have received divine knowledge from a bona fide spiritual master.

H

Hlādinī-śakti – The bliss potency of the Supreme Lord.

J

Jñāna – (1) Knowledge in general (2) Knowledge that leads to impersonal liberation.

Jīva – The eternal, individual living entity.

K

Kali-yuga – The present age of quarrel and hypocrisy that began 3102 B.C., the day Śrī Kṛṣṇa departed from this earth for His abode. It lasts for 432,000 years, of which approximately five thousand have now passed.

Kṛṣṇa-rasa – Transcendental mellows relished in relation with Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Karma – (1) Work prescribed in the Vedas (2) Activity in general (3) Pious activity leading to material gain in this world or to the higher planets after death.

Karma-kāṇḍa – The division of the Vedas that relates to ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites performed for material benefit or liberation.

Kīrtana – The most important limb of the ninefold system of devotional service, consisting of either: (1) congregational singing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy names; (2) loud individual chanting of the holy name; or (3) oral descriptions of the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's names, forms, qualities, associates and pastimes.

Kṣatriya –The second of the four *varṇas*, or castes, in the *varṇāśrama* system, which refers to an administrator or a warrior. Literally, *kṣi* – destruction; *tṛ* – deliverance.

M

Mahā-bhāgavata – Pure devotee of Bhagavān in the highest stage of devotional life, who is expert in Vedic literature, who has full faith in Śrī Kṛṣṇa and who can deliver the whole world.

Mantra – Literally, *man* – mind; *tra* – delivering; a spiritual sound vibration that delivers the mind from material conditioning and illusion; a Vedic hymn, prayer or chant.

Māyā – The Lord's material deluding potency.

N

Nāma – (1) Name (2) The holy name of Kṛṣṇa, which is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. *Nāma* is invested with all potencies, and with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's

qualities, paraphernalia, entourage, pastimes, transcendental abode and so forth.

Nāmābhāsa – A semblance of the holy name; the stage of chanting in which one is becoming cleared of sins and offences but has not yet attained pure chanting.

Nārada – A great sage among the demigods. Literally, *nāra* – God; *dā* – giver.

Nārāyaṇa – *Nāra* – mankind; *ayana* – the shelter of; the shelter for mankind; A four-armed expansion of Kṛṣṇa and the opulent Lord of Vaikuṇṭha.

P

Prema – Transcendental love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa that is extremely concentrated, and that completely melts the heart.

R

Rasa – The spiritual transformation of the heart when the perfected state of love for Kṛṣṇa is converted into heart-melting emotions by combining with various types of transcendental ecstasies.

Rāsa-līlā – The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's perfectly immaculate pastime of dancing with unlimited *gopīs*.

Rasa-tattva – The fundamental truth of transcendental mellows.

S

Sādhana – Method adopted to obtain a specific goal.

Sādhya – Object, or goal, for which one undergoes a corresponding practice.

Sampradāya – That process or path that bestows the Supreme Absolute Truth thoroughly and perfectly; a philosophical line of thought. A bona fide *sampradāya* transmits a perfect doctrine from one teacher to another.

Sannyāsa – The order of a renunciant, the fourth stage of life in the *varṇāśrama* system.

Satya-yuga – The first of the four cyclic ages in the progression of universal time. Satya-yuga is characterized by virtue, wisdom and religion. It is known as the golden age, when people lived as long as one hundred thousand years and it lasts 1,728,000 solar years.

Sukṛti – Spiritual merit.

Svarūpa – (1) Intrinsic nature, inherent identity (2) The eternal constitutional nature and identity of the self that is realized at the stage of transcendental ecstatic love.

T

Tattva – Fundamental truth. The truth relating to *bhakti* is known as *bhakti-tattva*.

Tretā-yuga – The second of the four *yugas*: Satya, Tretā, Dvāparā and Kali.

U

Upaniṣads – 108 principal philosophical treatises that appear within the Vedas.

V

Vaiṣṇava – Literally, "one whose nature is of Viṣṇu". In other words, "one in whose heart and mind, only Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa resides"; a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu.

Vṛndāvana – The supreme abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, wherein He enjoys human-like pastimes.

Varṇāśrama-dharma – *varṇa* means "social order" and *āśrama* means "a place of spiritual shelter". *Varṇas*, or occupational divisions, include *brāhmaṇas* – the priestly class, *kṣatriyas* – administrators and warriors, *vaiśyas* – farmers and tradesmen and *śūdras* – artisans. *Āśramas*, or stages of life, include *brahmacārī* – celibate student, *gṛhasta* – matrimony, *vānaprastha* – retirement and *sannyāsa* – the renounced order.

Varṇas – See *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

Veda – Knowledge, or the four primary books of knowledge compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, namely the *Ṛg Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Atharva Veda* and *Yajur Veda*.

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